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THE

COUNTESS OF RUDOLSTADT:

BEING

A SEQUEL TO "CONSUELO."

By GEORGE SAND,

AUTHOR OF "CONSUELO," "LITTLE FADETTE," &c.

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THE COUNTESS OF RUDOLSTADT.

(A SEQUEL TO CONSUELO.)

CHAPTER I.

The Italian Opera House of Berlin, in the early part of the reign of Frederick the Great, was at that time one of the most beautiful in Europe. The admission was gratuitous. Nevertheless, tickets of admission were necessary, since every box had its fixed destination: one being set apart for the princes and princesses of the royal family, another for the corps diplomatique, a third for illustrious travellers, this one for the academy, that for the generals; in short, nothing was to be seen but the king's family, the king's household, the king's dependents, the king's *protégés*, a circumstance of which none had the right to complain, since the theatre and the actors were the king's. There remained for the good citizens of the town of Berlin only a small portion of the pit, for the greater part was occupied by the military, each regiment having the right to send a certain number of men. Instead, therefore, of an audience of intelligent, joyous, and excitable Parisians, the artists had before their eyes a pit full of six-feet heroes, as Voltaire called them, smelling strongly of tobacco and brandy, understanding nothing, staring with their eyes wide open, not daring either to applaud or to hiss, out of respect to standing orders. The occupants of the two rows of boxes behind these gentlemen could neither see nor hear anything; but for form's sake, they were obliged to attend regularly at the spectacle which his majesty had the munificence to provide.

His majesty himself never missed a representation, thus in some sort, keeping a military eye upon the numerous members of his family and the unquiet swarm of courtiers. His father, Guillaume-le-Gros, had set him an example of this line of conduct in a roughly-constructed theatre, where, while listening to a company of wretched German actors, the royal family and the court sat freezing and shivering in dolorous plight, receiving the quick falling rain without moving a muscle, while the king comfortably slept. Still no one ventured to complain. The theatre was superb, the operas were admirably got up, the artists were of great renown, and the king, usually standing near the orchestra, with his opera-glass turned upon the stage, set the example of an indefatigable dilettantism.

The praises which Voltaire bestowed upon the splendour of the "Northern Solomon's" court are well known. Despised by Louis XV., neglected by his patroness, Madame de Pompadour, hissed at the Théâtre Français, he had left Paris to receive the office of chamberlain, the Grand Cordon, and the friendship of a philosophical king, more desirable in his eyes than all the rest. The great Voltaire, like a great child, fell to pouting at France, and thought to make his ungrateful fellow-countrymen break their hearts with vexation. It was therefore while still somewhat elated with his new glory, that he wrote to his friends that Berlin outshone Versailles, that the opera of "Phaeton" was the most beautiful spectacle that could be seen, and that the prima donna had the most magnificent voice in Europe.

At the time we commence our story (nearly a twelvemonth has passed since the last adventures of Consuelo), winter having set in with all its rigour at Berlin, and the great king having in some degree shown himself under his true colours, Voltaire began to be singularly disenchanted with Prussia. He was to be seen in his box between D'Argens and La Mettrie, but no longer pretending to like the music, to the charms of which he had never been susceptible any more than to those of true poetry. He was filled with secret grief as he recalled with melancholy feelings the ungrateful public and the fiery audiences of Paris, whose opposition had been so bitter to him, whose applauses so sweet, whose attacks, in a word, had so violently affected him, that he had sworn never to expose himself to them again, though he could not

refrain from constantly thinking of them and working without intermission in their behalf. The spectacle was excellent. It was the carnaval; the whole of the royal family, even the married margraves from the depths of Germany, were assembled at Berlin. The "Titus" of Metastasio and Hasse was in course of representation, while the two principal singers of the Italian troup, Le Porporino and La Porporina, filled the two principal parts. The first was Signor Uberti, an excellent contralto, the second, La Zingarella Consuelo, an exquisite singer, both pupils of the professor Porpora, who had permitted them to bear his honoured name.

Signora Porporina did not sing in Prussia with that enthusiasm which had inspired her in better days. While the flowing contralto of her companion echoed faultlessly beneath the roof of the Berlin Opera House, in all the security of an assured position, with the ease of incontestable success, and with a certain salary of 15,000 livres for two months' engagement, the poor Zingarella, more romantic perhaps, but assuredly more disinterested, and less accustomed to the cold climate of the north, and the still more freezing indifference of an audience of Prussian corporals, lost all her inspiration, and sung with that rigid and faultless precision which, while it leaves nothing for the critic to complain of, fails to excite enthusiasm. Now, there was no enthusiasm in Berlin under the reign of Frederick the Great. Order, obedience, were in the eighteenth century the only virtues that could bloom in that confined atmosphere: weighed out and measured, as it were, by the hand of the king. In all assemblies where he presided, in the whole mass of spectators there was but one person free to give way to his impression, and this was the king. He was, in his own person, the public; and though he loved music, every faculty and taste was submitted to so cold a logic, that the royal glances fixed upon every movement, and instead of stimulating, completely paralysed her powers. The least symptom of inspiration, the least access of unlooked-for enthusiasm, would probably have scandalised Frederick and his court, while difficult and scientific passages, executed with all the purity of a faultless mechanism, ravished the king, the court, and Voltaire. Voltaire, as every one knows, said, "Italian music is far superior to French music, because it is more highly ornamented, and because a difficulty conquered stands

at least for something." It was thus Voltaire understood art.

The opera was near a close; the king was pleased, and kept turning from time to time towards the leader of the orchestra, to express his approbation by a sign of the head; he was even preparing to applaud La Porporina at the end of a *cavatina*, as he had sometimes the goodness to do in person, and always judiciously, when, by an inexplicable caprice, La Porporina, in the middle of a brilliant *roulade*, where she had never before failed, stopped short, fixed her eyes wildly upon a corner of the theatre, clasped her hands, crying, "Oh my God!" and fell fainting to the ground. Porporino hastened to raise her; he was obliged to carry her behind the scenes, while a murmur of inquiries, and remarks arose amongst the audience.

During this scene the king addressed the tenor who was still upon the stage, and under cover of the noise said to him, in his brief and imperious tone—

"Well, what is it? what does it all mean? Conciolini, go quickly and see!"

Conciolini returned at the end of a few seconds. "Sire," said he, "La Signora Porporina looks as though she were dead. They fear that she cannot conclude the opera."

"Go!" said the king, shrugging his shoulders; "let them give her a glass of water, make her inhale some essences, and see that this is brought to a close as soon as possible," and the king entered into lively conversation with the leader of the orchestra and the musicians, while a portion of the public, who were much more interested in the state of the royal temper than in the poor Porporina, made vigorous, but useless efforts, to overhear the words of the monarch.

The Baron de Pœlnitz, grand chamberlain to the king, and director of the theatres, quickly came to render an account of the interruption.

"Well, baron!" said he, loud enough to be heard by any part of the orchestra, "will this soon be over? It is ridiculous! Have you no doctor in the slips? You should always have a doctor at the theatre."

"Sire, the doctor is in attendance."

"It is serious, then?"

"Sire, it appears to me to be very serious."

"In that case let the curtain be dropped, unless, indeed, Porporino will sing us something by way of compensation."

Porporino obeyed, and sang two airs delightfully.

The king clapped his hands, the public followed his example, and the representation was over. A moment after, while the court and the crowd were taking their departure, the king stepped upon the stage, and commanded Pœlnitz to conduct him to the dressing-room of the prima donna.

An actress suddenly taken ill on the stage is not an event in which every public sympathises as it ought; generally, however adored the idol may be, there is so much egotism in the enjoyment of the dilettante, that he is much more affected by his own loss of that enjoyment, from the interruption of the amusement, than by the suffering and agony of the victim. Certain ladies, as they were then called, deplored the catastrophe in these terms:—

"Poor child! she must have had a burr in her throat, and in the fear of a failure, she preferred to be taken ill."

"I believe it was no pretence" said a lady; "no one falls so heavily when they are not really ill."

"Ah! who knows, *ma chère?*" replied the first; "when one is a great actress, one can fall as one will, and one does not care for being a little hurt. It tells so well in public."

At the same moment, the Princess Amelia of Prussia, sister to the king, Abbess of Quedlimburg, exclaimed to her confidante, the beautiful Countess of Kleist—

"My dear child, did you observe my brother's agitation during this evening's adventure?"

"No, madame," replied Madame de Maupertius, chief lady to the princess; "I did not observe it."

"Oh! I was not speaking to you," returned the princess, with that quick and decided tone which sometimes gave her a strong resemblance to Frederick; "do you ever observe anything? Stay, look at the stars now, for I have something to say to Madame de Kleist which I do not wish you to hear."

Madame de Maupertius conscientiously closed her ears, and the princess, leaning towards Madame de Kleist, said—

"It seems to me that for the first time during the last fifteen, or twenty years, the king is in love."

"Your royal highness said the same last year with respect

to Mademoiselle Barberini, and yet his majesty never thought of her."

"Never thought of her! You are mistaken, my child. He thought of her so much that when the young Chancellor Coccei made her his wife, my brother laboured for three days under the finest fit of repressed rage that ever he had in his life."

"Your highness knows well that his majesty cannot endure *mésalliances*."

The princess drew a long sigh, and passing rapidly, according to custom, to another state of mind, she said to the mistress of her household—

"Maupertius, you are listening to us! you are not looking at the stars as I desired you to do."

"Yes, I say," she continued, again addressing herself to her favourite, "that the king had an incipient love for this Barberini. I know from good authority that he often took tea with Jordan and Chazols, in her apartment, after the performances were over, and that she had even been present more than once at the suppers of Sans-Souci; a thing unexampled before her time in the life of Potsdam. Shall I tell you more? She lived there, she had an apartment in the palace for several weeks, and it may have been for months together."

"Since your royal highness is so well informed, you cannot be ignorant that, for reasons of state, which it is not my place to divine, the king has sometimes desired to make people think that he is not so austere as they presume him to be, though in reality——"

"Though in reality my brother has never loved any woman, not even his own wife, if one may judge from what is said, and from appearances. Well, I do not believe in this virtue, still less in this coldness. Frederick was always a hypocrite; but he will not persuade me that Mademoiselle Barberini lived in his palace only to have it believed that she was his mistress. She is as pretty as an angel, and witty as a devil; she is accomplished, and speaks I know not how many languages."

"She is very virtuous, she adores her husband."

"And her husband adores her all the more because he has made a frightful *mésalliance*. Is it not so, De Kleist? There, you will not reply to me. I suspect, noble widow,

that you are meditating some such thing yourself with some poor page, or some small bachelor of arts."

"And your highness desires to see a *mésalliance de cœur* established between the king and some lady of the opera?"

"Ah! with La Porporina the thing would be more probable, and the distance less frightful. I imagine that at the theatre, as at court, there is a hierarchy; for such a prejudice is the whim and the disease of human nature. A singer must hold herself much higher than a dancer; and they say, moreover, that this Porporina has fine talent, cultivation, and grace; nay, that she even knows more languages than La Barberini. To speak languages of which he is utterly ignorant, is my brother's mania. And then music, which he pretends to like greatly, though he knows nothing about it, do ye see, that is another point of interest with our prima donna. Then she also goes to Potsdam in the summer, she has the appartment La Barberini occupied in the new Sans-Souci; she sings at the king's private concerts. Is not that enough to prove the truth of my conjecture?"

"Your highness in vain hopes to surprise a weakness in the life of our great prince. All that you speak of is done too openly and too gravely for love to have any part in the affair."

"Love! no. Frederick does not know what love is; but a certain attraction, a small intrigue. Every one speaks of this in secret, you cannot deny that."

"No one believes it, madame. They say that the king, as a relaxation, makes an effort to be amused with the prattle and the pretty warblings of an actress; but that at the end of a quarter of an hour's talk and singing, he says to her, as he would say to one of his secretaries, 'That is enough for to-day; if I desire to have you to-morrow, I will send for you.'"

"That is not gallant. If it was thus he made court to Madame de Coccei, I am not surprised that she could not endure him. Do they say that La Porporina is as cruel to him?"

"They say that she is perfectly modest, well-behaved, timid, and sad."

"Perhaps she is very clever. If she be so, and if one could but trust her——"

"Trust to no one, madame, I implore you."

"I desire to know this Porporina, and to see if she can be made of any use. I greatly regret that I could not receive her when the king proposed bringing her to sing to me some morning; you know I had a prejudice against her——"

"Ill-founded, certainly. It was quite impossible——"

"Ah, let it be as God wills! Grief and terror have so worked upon me in the past year, that all secondary cares are effaced. I must see this girl. Who knows but that she might obtain from the king what we vainly implore? I have pictured this to myself for some days, and as you know, I think but on one thing. When I saw Frederick anxious and uneasy about her this evening, I became confirmed in the idea that a means of escape might be found through her agency."

"I entreat your highness to take great care, for the danger is great."

"You always say that; I am more suspicious and prudent than yourself. It must be thought of, nevertheless. Awake, my dear Maupertius, we are arrived."

CHAPTER II.

Whilst the young and beautiful abbess gave herself up to these reflections, the king, without knocking entered the dressing-room of La Porporina, at the very moment when she was returning to consciousness.

"Well, mademoiselle," he said to her, in a tone little expressive of compassion, and scarcely even polite, "how do you find yourself? Are you subject to these attacks? In your profession this would be a serious inconvenience. Has anything vexed you? Are you so ill that you cannot reply? Do you answer me, monsieur," said he to the doctor, who was attending the singer, "is she seriously ill?"

"Yes, sire," replied the doctor, "the pulse is hardly perceptible. There is considerable disorder in the circulation, and all the functions of life, are, as it were, suspended: the skin is icy cold."

"That is true," said the king, taking the young girl's hand in his own; "the eyes are fixed, the mouth is colourless. The devil! I thought it a piece of acting, but I was mistaken. The girl is indeed very ill. She is neither mischievous nor capricious, is she, Monsieur Porporino? No one has offended her this evening? No one has ever had any cause of complaint against her, have they?"

"Sire, she is not an actress," replied Porporino, "she is an angel."

"Nothing more than that! Are you in love with her?"

"No, sire, my respect for her is without bounds; I look upon her as my sister."

"Thanks to you two, and to God, my theatre is about to become a school of virtue! Ah! she is coming to herself again. Porporina, do you not recognise me?"

"No, monsieur," replied La Porporina, looking with a bewildered air at the king, who was chafing her hands.

"Perhaps it is a brain fever," said the king; "have you ever observed that she was epileptic?"

"Oh! sire, never! that would be dreadful, indeed," returned Porporina, hurt at the brutal manner in which the king expressed himself.

"Ah! hold, do not bleed her," said the king, repelling the doctor, armed with his lancet; "I do not like to see innocent blood flowing coldly when not on the field of battle. Leave her alone; give her air. Porporino, do not let her be bled; it would, in all probability, be the death of her. These gentlemen fear nothing. I confide her to you. Take her away in your carriage, Pœlnitz, and be answerable for her. She is the greatest singer we have as yet had among us, and we shall not quickly find her equal. Apropos, what will you sing us to-morrow, Monsieur Conciolini?"

The king descended the staircase of the theatre with the tenor, speaking upon other matters, and went to supper with Voltaire, La Mettrie, D'Argens, Algarotti, and the General Quintus Icilius.

Frederick was harsh, violent, and profoundly selfish. With this, he was generous and good, even tender and affectionate, on certain occasions. This is no paradox. Everyone knows the character, at once terrible and fascinating, of this many-sided man, who possessed a complicated organization, full of contrasts, like all powerful natures, especially when they are

invested with supreme power, and when a life of agitation has developed all their faculties.

In the midst of supper, while chatting and joking with alternate grace and bitterness, with rudeness and delicacy, in the centre of dear friends whom he disliked, and celebrated *beaux esprits* whom he but little admired, Frederick suddenly became thoughtful, and rising after a few moments of preoccupation, said to his guests, "Continue talking: I hear you." Upon which he passed into a neighbouring room, took his hat and sword, made a sign to a page to follow him, and plunged among the deep galleries, and mysterious staircases of his old palace, while his guests, believing him close at hand, took heed to their words, and dared not say anything which he might not hear. Moreover, they were so mistrustful of one another (and not without cause), that whatever spot they might be upon in the Prussian territory, they ever felt the formidable and malicious phantom of Frederick hovering over them.

La Mettrie, the physician but little consulted, and the reader but rarely listened to by the king, was the only one among the courtiers who knew no fear, and who inspired none. Whether from some singular frankness, profound calculation, or audacious indifference, he treated the king with as little ceremony as the king pretended to desire. He would take off his cravat, his wig, even his shoes in his apartments, talk freely with him, contradict him openly, express himself without restraint upon the little value to be attached to worldly grandeur, speak of royalty as of religion, and comment upon all other prejudices attacked by the reason of the day; in a word, he would conduct himself in so cynical a manner, and give so many occasions for disgrace or dismissal, that it was a miracle to see him stand his ground where so many others had been overthrown and crushed for the most trifling peccadilloes. The reason of this was, that upon characters suspicious and distrustful as Frederick's, an insidious word repeated by a spy, any appearance of hypocrisy, the slightest doubt, makes more impression than a thousand imprudencies. Frederick looked upon La Mettrie as a madman.

"But he is sincere, he would add, and does not hold two languages, two opinions, as regards me. He cannot treat me worse in secret than he does to my face; while for the rest

who are at my feet, what do they not say and think when I turn my back upon them, and they can raise their heads. Then La Mettrie is the most honest man I possess, and I ought to endure him all the more that he is unendurable."

The Marquis d'Argens, chamberlain, with six thousand francs salary (the first chamberlain, Voltaire, had twenty thousand), was the true Frenchman of his time; a superficial philosopher, a light and rapid writer, good-natured, giddy, licentious, sentimental; at once brave and effeminate, *spirituel*, generous, and scornful; a middle-aged man, romantic as a youth of twenty, and as sceptical as an old man. He had ended by marrying in secret Mademoiselle Cochois, first actress of the Comédie Française at Berlin, a woman plain even to ugliness, but very intelligent, whom he had pleased himself with educating. Frederick was still ignorant of this mysterious union, and D'Argens took care not to reveal it to those who might betray him. Nevertheless, Voltaire was in his confidence. D'Argens sincerely loved the king, but he was not more beloved by him than the rest. Frederick believed in no one's affection, and the poor D'Argens was now the accomplice, now the butt of his cruel pleasantries.

It is well known that the colonel upon whom Frederick bestowed the emphatic surname of Quintus Icilius, was by birth a Frenchman, named Guichard, an energetic soldier, and a skilful tactician; for the rest, a great plunderer, like all people of his species, and a courtier in the full meaning of the word.

We will say nothing concerning D'Algarotti, that we may not weary the reader with a whole gallery of historical personages. It will be sufficient to indicate the anxieties of Frederick's guests during his absence. We have already said, that instead of feeling relieved from the secret embarrassment which oppressed them, their uneasiness was but increased, and they could not say a word without glancing at the half-open door by which the king had gone out, and from behind which he was, perhaps, surveying them. La Mettrie was the only exception, and observing that the attendance upon the table was neglected in the absence of the king—

"Parbleu;" he cried, "I think the master of the house is very ill-bred to leave us thus without servants and cham-

pagne. I shall see if he be in his room that I may complain to him."

He rose, and without fear of committing an indiscretion, went into the king's chamber, and returned, crying—

"No one is there! This is pleasant! He is quite capable of getting to horse and performing a manœuvre by torch-light to aid his digestion. The queer animal!"

"It is you who are a queer animal," said Quintus Icilius, who could not reconcile himself to the strange manners of La Mettrie.

"So the king has gone out," said Voltaire, beginning to breathe more freely.

"Yes, the king has gone out," said the Baron de Pœlnitz, entering. "I have just met him in a back court, with one page for his escort. He was in grand incognito, and wore his wall-coloured dress, therefore I did not recognise him at all."

We must say a word upon this third chamberlain who had just entered, otherwise the reader will not understand how another than La Mettrie should dare to express himself with so little ceremony concerning his master. Pœlnitz, whose age was as problematical as his salary and his functions, was that Prussian baron, that *roué* of the regency, who shone in his youth at the court of Madame Palatine, the mother of the Duc d'Orleans. He was a reckless gambler, whose debts the King of Prussia refused to pay; a great adventurer, a cynical libertine, an unconscionable spy; not a little of a sharper, a shameless flatterer, supported, despised, ridiculed, and very ill-paid by his master, who, notwithstanding, could not dispense with his services, since an absolute monarch has always need of some man capable of the worst actions, and who finds in their performance the means of living and indemnity for his evil deeds. Pœlnitz was, moreover, at this period the director of his majesty's theatre, a species of supreme commissioner of his privy purse. He was already called the old Pœlnitz, as he was called some thirty years later. He was an eternal courtier. He had been page to the last king, and joined to the refined vices of the regency, the cynical grossness of the divan of Le Gros Guillaume, and the impertinent formality of the military and *bel-esprit* reign of Frederick the Great. His favour with this monarch being a chronic state of disgrace, he cared little for losing it; and then, as he always played the part of a provocative

agent, he had no real fear of the bad offices of any one with the master who employed him.

"Pardieu! my dear baron," cried La Mettrie; "you should have followed the king, and then have come and told us his adventure. We would have made him swear on his return, by telling him how, without leaving the table, we had seen his actions and movements."

"Still better!" said Pœlnitz, laughing; "we could have told him that to-morrow, when we might have set the divination down to the account of a sorcerer."

"What sorcerer?" asked Voltaire.

"The famous Count de Saint Germain, who has been here since the morning."

"Indeed! I am very curious to know if he be a charlatan or a fool."

"And there is the difficulty," said La Mettrie; "he plays his game so well, that no one can determine which he is."

"That is not so foolish, either," said Algarotti.

"Tell me about Frederick," said La Mettrie; "I want to pique his curiosity by some good history, that he may regale us some of these days at supper with Saint Germain and his adventures before the Deluge. That will amuse me. Come now! where is our dear monarch at this moment? Baron, you know! You are too curious not to have followed him, or too malicious not to have divined."

"Would you have me tell you?" said Pœlnitz.

"I hope, monsieur," said Quintus, becoming purple with indignation, "that you are not going to reply to M. la Mettrie's strange questions. If his majesty——"

"Oh! *mon cher*," said La Mettrie, "there is no majesty here from ten o'clock in the evening till two o'clock in the morning. Frederick made this a statute once for all, and I but recognise the law: 'There is no king at supper.' You do not see that this poor king is weary, and you will not assist him, bad servant and friend as you are, to forget in the sweet hours of night the burden of his grandeur? Come, Pœlnitz, dear baron, speak; where is the king now?"

"I will not hear," said Quintus, rising, and quitting the table.

"At your pleasure," said Pœlnitz. "Let those who will not hear close their ears!"

"I open mine," said La Mettrie.

"And, by my faith, so do I," said Algarotti, laughing.

"Messieurs," said Pœlnitz, "his majesty is with the Signora Porporina."

"You are imposing upon us finely!" cried La Mettrie; and he added a sentence in Latin, which I cannot translate for you, since I do not understand Latin.

Quintus Icilius turned pale, and went out. Algarotti recited an Italian sonnet, which I do not understand much better; and Voltaire improvised some verses, comparing Frederick to Julius Cæsar; after which the three learned men looked at each other, smiling; and Pœlnitz continued, with a serious air:—

"I give you my word of honour, that the king is with La Porporina."

"Can you not give us something else?" said D'Argens, to whom all this was displeasing at heart, for he was not a man to betray others to increase his own credit.

Pœlnitz replied, without disturbing himself—

"A thousand devils! monsieur le marquis; when the king tells us that you are with Mademoiselle Cochois, we are not scandalized at that. Why, then, are you scandalized, because he is with Mademoiselle Porporina?"

"It ought, on the contrary, to please you," said Algarotti; "and if it be true, I will go and proclaim it at Rome."

"And his holiness, who is somewhat of a joker," added Voltaire, "will say some smart things concerning it."

"Upon what will his holiness joke?" asked the king, appearing suddenly on the threshold of the supper-room.

"Upon the friendship of Frederick the Great for La Porporina of Venice," replied La Mettrie, impudently.

The king turned pale, and darted a terrible look at his guests; who, in their turn, became pale, with the exception of La Mettrie.

"What is the matter?" said the latter, tranquilly. "M. de Saint Germain predicted this evening, at the opera, that at the hour when Saturn would pass between Regulus and the Virgin, his majesty, followed by a single page——"

"Indeed! Who is this Count de Saint Germain?" said the king, seating himself with the greatest tranquillity, and holding his glass towards La Mettrie to be filled with champagne.

The Count de Saint Germain now became the subject of conversation, and the storm passed away without exploding. At the first shock, the impertinence of Pœlnitz, who had betrayed him, and the audacity of La Mettrie, who had dared to tell him of it, had transported the king with anger; but during the time La Mettrie took to say a few words, Frederick remembered that he had recommended Pœlnitz to speak upon certain matters, and to make others speak also upon the first opportunity. He had then restrained himself, with that ease and freedom of mind which he possessed in the highest degree; and no more was said upon his nocturnal walk, than if it had been unobserved. La Mettrie would not have scrupled to return to the charge, had the thought occurred to him; but his light mind followed the new direction Frederick had given, and it was thus Frederick often managed La Mettrie himself. He treated him as a child, whom one sees about to break a glass or jump out of a window, and to whom one shows some plaything to turn him from his fancy. Every one made his remarks upon the famous Count de Saint Germain, every one related some anecdote. Pœlnitz pretended that he had seen him in France some twenty years before.

"And I saw him again this morning, as little aged as though I had only seen him yesterday."

"Well, sire, are you not dying with the wish to see and hear him?" said La Mettrie. "I am burning with impatience."

"How can you be curious about the matter?" replied the king. "Madness is anything but an attractive sight."

"If he be mad, granted; but if he be not?"

"Do you hear, gentlemen?" returned Frederick; "here is a sceptic, an atheist, *par excellence*, who is taken with the marvellous, and who already believes in the eternal existence of M. de Saint Germain! Nevertheless, that ought not to astonish you, when it is known that La Mettrie has a terror of death, thunder, and ghosts."

"As to ghosts, I confess it is a weakness," said La Mettrie; "but for thunder, and all that can cause death, I maintain it is reasonable and wise. What, I ask you, should any one be afraid of, if it be not of that which may put an end to existence?"

"Vive Panurge!" said Voltaire.

"I return to my Saint Germain," continued La Mettrie; "Messire Pantagruel should ask him to sup with us to-morrow."

"I shall take good care of that," said the king; "you are mad enough already, my poor friend, and it needs but that he should set foot in my house, for all the superstitious imaginations which swarm around us to conceive a thousand ridiculous tales, which will quickly make the tour of Europe. Oh! that the reign of reason would begin! my dear Voltaire; this is the prayer that should be offered every morning and evening."

"Reason! reason!" said La Mettrie; "I find it fitting and benevolent when it serves to excuse and legitimise my passions, my vices, or my appetites, give them what name you will; but when it annoys me I ask leave to turn it out of doors. I will have nothing to do with a reason which shall oblige me to be brave when I am frightened, to be a stoic when I suffer, to be calm when I am in a rage. The deuce take such reason! it shall be none of mine; it is a monster, a chimera, invented by those old dotards whom you all admire, I know not why. May its reign never arrive! I do not like absolute power of any kind; and if any one insisted upon my not believing in a God, which now I do with a good grace, and with my whole heart, I really believe that, from the very spirit of contradiction, I should go to confession directly."

"Oh! you are capable of anything, as we all know," said D'Argens, "even of believing in the philosopher's stone of the Count Saint Germain."

"And why not? It would be so delightful, and I have such need of it."

"Ah! as for that," cried Pœlnitz, shaking his empty pockets, and looking at the king with an expressive air, "may its reign arrive speedily; it is a prayer which every morning and evening—"

"Indeed!" interrupted Frederick, who always turned a deaf ear to that kind of insinuation; "this Monsieur de Saint Germain declares the existence of a secret for making gold? You did not tell me that?"

"Now then, permit me from you to invite him for supper to-morrow," said La Mettrie; "for it is my opinion that a little of his secret would do you no harm either, Sire

Garagantua! You have a great many wants and a gigantic stomach, both as a king and a reformer."

"Be silent, Panurge," replied Frederick; "your Saint Germain is condemned already. He is an impostor and an impudent fellow, whom I will put under strict surveillance: for we know that with such a secret people carry more money out of a country than they leave behind; eh, messieurs? Have you already forgotten the great necromancer, Cagliostro, whom I caused to be driven out of Berlin, in good earnest, only six months ago?"

"And who carried away a hundred of my crowns," said La Mettrie.

"And who would have carried them away from Pœlnitz, if he had had them to give," said D'Argens.

"You caused him to be driven out," said La Mettrie to Frederick; "but he played you a good trick, and a very good one."

"How?"

"Ah! you do not know! Well, I will regale you with a story."

"The first merit of a story is to be short," observed the king.

"Mine can be told in two words. On the day when your Pantagruelesyne majesty ordered the sublime Cagliostro to pack up his alembics, his spectres, and his demons, it is of public notoriety that, as twelve o'clock struck, he went out in person in his carriage through all the gates of Berlin at the same time. This is attested by more than twenty thousand persons. The keepers of all the gates saw him with the same hat, the same wig, the same carriage, the same baggage, the same horses, and you will never get it from their minds that there were, on that day, five or six Cagliostros afloat."

Every one laughed at this story. Frederick was the only exception. He was very much in earnest about the progress of his dear reason, and the superstition which filled Voltaire with gaiety, was to him only a subject of anger and indignation.

"These are the people," cried he, shrugging his shoulders; "ah! Voltaire, these are the people! And this is an age when you are living, and when you shake over the world the bright light of your torch. They have banished, perse-

cuted, and attacked you on all sides, and Cagliostro has but to show himself to fascinate whole populations. A little more and they would carry him on their shoulders in triumph!"

"Do you know," said La Mettrie, "that your greatest ladies believe in Cagliostro quite as firmly as the good women in your streets? Know that it is from one of the most beautiful of your court I have learned this adventure."

"I will wager that it is Madame de Kleist!" said the king. "This good De Kleist is mad," he continued; "she is the most intrepid visionary, the most infatuated creature for horoscopes and witchcraft. She wants a lesson; let her look to herself! She turns the brains of all our ladies, and they even say that she has sent her husband mad, who sacrificed black goats to Satan that he might discover the treasures buried in our sands of Brandebourg."

"But all this is in its place at your house, père Pantagruel," said La Mettrie. "I know not why you should insist upon the women submitting to your cross-grained goddess Reason. Women are only sent into the world to amuse themselves and us. Pardieu! the day when they are no longer mad, we shall look very foolish! Madame de Kleist is charming with all her histories of sorcerers; she regales Soror Amelia."

"What does he mean with his Soror Amelia?" said the king, astonished.

"Why, your noble and charming sister, the Abbess of Quedlimberg, who deals in magic with all her heart, as every one knows."

"Hold your tongue, Panurge!" repeated the king, in a voice of thunder, and striking the table with his snuff-box.

CHAPTER III.

There was a moment of silence, during which midnight slowly struck. Voltaire had usually the art to rouse the conversation when a cloud passed over the brow of his dear Trojan, and to efface the impression which it produced on

the rest of the guests. But this evening, Voltaire, sad and suffering, felt the weight of that Prussian spleen which quickly took possession of the happy mortals summoned to the contemplation of Frederick in his glory. It was on that very morning La Mettrie had repeated to him that fatal sentence of Frederick's which, from a pretended friendship, brought on a real aversion between these two great men. As it was, he said not a word. "My faith," thought he, "let him throw away that peel, La Mettrie, when it seems good to him; let him be ill-tempered; let him suffer, so that supper ends. I have a cholic, and all his compliments do not prevent me from feeling it."

Frederick was thus obliged to recover his philosophical serenity for himself.

"Since we are upon the subject of Cagliostro," said he, "and the hour for ghost stories has just struck, I am going to tell you one of my own, and you shall judge how much is to be believed of the science of sorcery. My story is very authentic. I had it from the person to whom the adventure happened last summer. The incident of this evening at the theatre brought it back to my memory, and perhaps this incident is connected with what you are about to hear."

"Will the story be terrible?" asked La Mettrie.

"Perhaps," replied the king.

"In that case," said he, "I will shut the door behind me. I cannot bear an open door when ghosts and prodigies are being spoken of."

La Mettrie shut the door, and the king spoke thus:—

"Cagliostro, you know, had the art of showing to credulous people pictures, or rather, magic mirrors, upon the surface of which he caused absent persons to appear. He pretended to surprise them at the very moment, and thus to reveal the most secret actions and occupations of their lives. Be that as it may, the Italian opera singers met together one evening to offer him a handsome supper and good music, upon condition that he would show them something of his art. He accepted the exchange and appointed a day with Porporino, Conciolini, les Demoiselles Astrua, and Porporina, at his own house. The family of Barberini was also of the party. Mademoiselle Jeanne Barberini asked to see the deceased Doge of Venice, and as M. Cagliostro is very clever in raising the dead, she saw him, was terribly frightened,

and in great alarm left the dark closet where the sorcerer had put her *tête-à-tête* with a ghost. I strongly suspect that La Barberini, who loves a joke, as Voltaire says, had feigned this terror that she might have a laugh against our Italian actors, who, by the way, are not brave, and who openly refused to be submitted to the same proof. Mademoiselle Porporina, with that quiet air you all know, told M. Cagliostro that she would believe in his art if he would show her the person of whom she was thinking at that moment, and whom she had no need to name, since he was a sorcerer, and ought to be able to read her soul, as he would read a book.

"'What you require of me is very serious,' replied Cagliostro; "'still I think I can satisfy you, if you will swear to me, by all that is most solemn and terrible, that you will not address one word to the person whom I shall show you; that you will not make the least movement, the least action, the least noise, during the time that the apparition lasts.'

"Porporina took the oath, and entered the dark closet with great resolution. It is not necessary to remind you, gentlemen, that this young person has one of the firmest and most upright minds to be met with; she is highly cultivated, reasons well on all things, and, I have cause to believe, is inaccessible to any false or narrow ideas. She remained, then, sufficiently long in the apparition-chamber to surprise and render her companions uneasy. Everything went on in the most complete silence. When she came out she was very pale, and tears, they say, were flowing from her eyes. But she said immediately to her companions—

"My friends, if M. Cagliostro be a sorcerer, he is a lying sorcerer; believe nothing he shows you."

"She would not explain herself further. But Conciolini having related to me, some days after, at one of my concerts, the events of this marvellous evening, I undertook to question La Porporina, which I did not fail to do the first time she came to sing at Sans-Souci. I had some trouble to make her speak. This is what she, at last, related:—

"Beyond doubt, M. Cagliostro possesses extraordinary means for producing apparitions so like the reality that it is impossible for the calmest minds to remain unmoved by them. Still, he is not a sorcerer, and his pretended reading of my thoughts was founded upon a knowledge which he must have had of some particulars of my life; but it is an

incomplete knowledge, and I would not advise you, sire ("it is Porporina who is speaking," observed the king), to take him for your minister of police, for he makes grave errors. Thus when I asked him to show me the absent person whom I desired to see, I thought of Maître Porpora, my music-master, who is now at Vienna; and instead of him I saw in the magic chamber a very dear friend whom I lost this year.'"

"Peste!" said D'Argens, "that savours much more of a sorcerer than to make a living person appear!"

"Patience, gentlemen. Cagliostro, ill-informed, never suspected that the person whom he had shown was dead; for when the phantom had disappeared, he asked Mademoiselle Porporina if she were satisfied with what she had just learned?"

"'First of all, monsieur,' she replied; 'I desire to understand it; will you explain it to me?'

"'That is beyond my power,' he replied; 'let it suffice you to know that your friend is tranquil, and that he is usefully occupied.'

"Upon which the signora returned—

"'Alas, monsieur! you have caused me great pain without knowing it: you have shown me a person whom I never thought to see again, and you give him back to me as living, when I closed his eyes but six months ago.'

"This, gentlemen," continued Frederick, "is how sorcerers are deceived in wishing to deceive others, and how their plots are unhinged by a spring which escapes their secret police. They penetrate up to a certain point into the mysteries of families, and those of secret affections. As all histories in this world resemble each other, more or less, and as in general people incline to the marvellous, forbearing to look closely into it, they guess rightly twenty times out of thirty; but ten times out of thirty they fail, yet little attention is paid to these failures, while a great stir is made about the trials which have proved successful. It is exactly the same as with the horoscopes, where they will predict you a series of common events which must necessarily happen to every one, such as voyages, illnesses, the loss of a friend or relative, an inheritance, a meeting, an interesting letter, and other common occurrences of human life. Nevertheless, remark to what catastrophes and domestic sufferings the false revelations of Cagliostro expose weak and impassioned minds!

Let a husband trust to them, and he may kill an innocent wife; a mother may go mad with grief, from believing she sees her absent son on his death-bed, with a thousand other disasters which the pretended science of magical divination may occasion! All this is infamous; and now confess that I was right to drive away from my states this Cagliostro, who guesses so well, and who gives such good news of people dead and buried."

"All this is very fine," said La Mettrie, "but it does not explain how La Porporina saw this dead man standing before her. For after all, if she be gifted with strength and reason, as *your majesty* affirms, that makes against the argument of *your majesty*. The sorcerer was deceived, it is true, in drawing from his magazine a dead man for a living one, who was asked of him; but it is only the more certain that he disposes both of *the dead and the living;* and in that, he is wiser than *your majesty*, who, be it said *without offence to your majesty*, has caused many men to be killed in war, but has never brought one to life. I have fixed you with an embarrassing argument; either the charming Porporina is foolish and weak, and she has seen her dead friend, or she is a philosopher, and has seen nothing at all. Still she confesses she was frightened."

"She was not frightened," said the king, "but she was grieved, as one is grieved at the sight of a portrait which minutely recalls a beloved person whom we but too well know we shall never see again. But if I must tell you all, I am inclined to think that she was somewhat terrified, and that her moral strength did not issue from this trial as sound as it went into it. Since this time she has been subject to attacks of deep melancholy, which are ever a proof of weakness and disorder in our faculties. I am sure her mind is impressed with what she saw, though she denies it. She cannot play with falsehood with impunity. The kind of attack she has had this evening, is, in my opinion, the result of all this; and I feel sure that she cherishes some inward terror at the magical power attributed to M. de Saint Germain. They tell me that since she returned home she has done nothing but weep."

"Ah! you must forgive me for not believing that, *cher majesté*," said La Mettrie. "You have been to see her, therefore she no longer weeps."

"Are you very curious, Panurge, to know the object of my visit? And you, also, D'Argens, who say nothing, and who look as though you were not thinking of anything? And you also, perhaps, *cher* Voltaire, who say nothing either, but who certainly do not think the less."

"How can one help being curious as to all Frederick the Great thinks proper to do?" replied Voltaire, who made an effort at politeness, as he saw the king inclined to talk; "it may be that certain men have no right to hide anything, when the least of their words is a precept, and the least of their actions an example."

"My dear friend, you will make me vain. Who would not be vain, praised by Voltaire? But that does not prevent you from having amused yourself at my expense during the quarter of an hour I was absent; and yet, during that quarter of an hour, you cannot suppose I had time to go so far as the opera, where La Porporina lives, to recite her a long madrigal, and return on foot, for I was on foot."

"Bah! sire, the opera is close at hand," said Voltaire, "and you do not take more time than that to gain a battle."

"You are mistaken; it takes much longer," said the king, coldly; "ask Quintus Icilius. However, gentlemen, I have not seen Mademoiselle Porporina to-night; I went to speak with her servant only, and to see how she was."

"You, sire?" cried La Mettrie.

"I wished to carry her in person a smelling-bottle, from which I suddenly recollected that I had derived great benefit when I was subject to spasms in the stomach, which sometimes deprived me of all consciousness. Well, you say nothing! You are all amazed! You wish to praise my royal and paternal goodness, and you dare not speak, because at the bottom of your hearts you think me perfectly ridiculous."

"By my faith! sire, if, like a simple mortal you are enamoured, I have nothing to say against it," said La Mettrie, "and I see no cause for praise or raillery."

"Well, my good Panurge, since I must speak out openly, I am not at all enamoured. I am a simple mortal, it is true; but I have not the honour to be the King of France, and the gallant customs which befit a great monarch like Louis XV., would but ill-suit a plain Marquis of Brandebourg like myself. I have other cards to play to keep my poor shop

going, and I have no time to sleep in the bowers of Cytherea."

"In that case, I do not at all understand your solicitude for this little opera singer," said La Mettrie; "and unless it be caused by some musical rage, I give up guessing the matter."

"This being the case, know, my friend that I am not the lover, nor enamoured of La Porporina, but that I am greatly attached to her, because, under circumstances too long to repeat now, she saved my life without knowing who I was. The adventure is singular; I will relate it to you at some other time. It is too late this evening, and M. de Voltaire is already asleep. Let it suffice you to know, that if I am here, and not in the infernal regions, where devotion would have sent me, I owe it to this girl. You understand now why, knowing her dangerously indisposed, I should go and see that she was still alive, and carry her a smelling-bottle, without therefore desiring to pass in your eyes for a Richelieu or a Lauzun. Go, gentlemen, I wish you a good evening. It is eighteen hours since I had my boots off, and I must put them on again in six."

* * * * *

As midnight sounded from the great clock of the palace, the young and worldly abbess of Quedlimberg had just placed herself in her rose-satin bed, when her first *femme-de-chambre*, as she was placing her slippers on the ermine carpet, trembled and uttered a cry. Someone was knocking at the bed-chamber door of the princess.

"Well, are you mad?" said the beautiful Amelia, opening her curtains; "what is the matter with you, that you start and scream so?"

"Did not your royal highness hear someone knock?"

"Did someone knock? Go then and see who it was."

"Ah! madame, what living person dare knock at your highness's door when it is known that you are in bed?"

"No living person would dare, say you? In that case it must be some dead person. Go and open the door in the meantime. Ah! the knock is repeated; quick, you make me impatient."

The *femme-de-chambre*, more dead than alive, dragged herself towards the door, and asked, "Who is there?"

"It is I, Madame de Kleist," replied a well-known voice.

"If the princess be not yet asleep, tell her that I have something important to say to her."

"Quick! quick! let her in," cried the princess, "and leave us together."

As soon as the abbess and her favourite were alone, the latter seated herself upon the foot of her mistresses's bed, and thus spoke :—

"Your royal highness was not deceived. The king is madly in love with La Porporina, but he is not yet her lover, which certainly gives the girl, for the time being, unbounded influence over his mind."

"And how have you learned this all in an hour?"

"Because, as I was undressing for bed, I induced my *femme-de-chambre* to gossip, who told me that she had a sister in the service of this Porporina. Upon that I questioned her, gradually drew from her all she knew, till passing insensibly from one thing to another, I learned that my maid had just left her sister, and that at the same moment the king was quitting the house of La Porporina."

"Are you quite sure of this?"

"My *fille-de-chambre* had just seen the king as I see you. He had spoken to her, mistaking her for her sister, who was engaged somewhere else, attending her sick mistress, or pretending to be so. The king inquired after the health of La Porporina with extreme solicitude, and stamped with an air of vexation when he heard that she had never ceased weeping; he did not ask to see her for fear of disturbing her, he said, he left a very precious smelling-bottle for her, and at last retired, desiring her maid to be sure and tell the invalid, on the morrow, that he had come to see her at eleven o'clock in the evening."

"Here is an adventure, I hope!" cried the princess, "but I dare hardly believe my ears. Does your maid know the king's features well?"

"Who does not know the face of a king who is for ever in the saddle? Besides, a page had been sent in advance five minutes before, to see that no one was with the lady. In the meantime the king, cloaked and muffled up, waited below in the street, in grand incognito, according to custom."

"Thus, there is mystery, solicitude, and above all, respect. This is love, or I know nothing of it, De Kleist. And you

have come, in spite of the cold and the night, to tell me this at once! Ah! my poor child, how good you are!"

"Say, also, in spite of the ghosts. Do you know that there has been a new panic in the château for the last few nights, and that my *chasseur* trembled like a great fool, as he crossed the corridor in attendance upon me."

"What is it? The white woman again?"

"Yes, *the sweeper*."

"This time it is not our trick, my poor De Kleist! Our phantoms are far enough away; would that it would please heaven for these ghosts to return!"

"I thought at first it was the king who was amusing himself with playing the ghost, since he has motives at present for driving away curious servants from his passage. But what astonishes me is, that the spectre does not pass near his apartments, nor upon the route which he must take to visit La Porporina. It is around your highness that the spirit wanders, and I confess, that now I have no hand in it, I am somewhat afraid."

"What is that you say, child? How can you believe in spectres, you who know them so well?"

"And this is precisely the *rub!* For they say that it makes them angry to be imitated, and that they haunt you by way of punishment."

"In that case they have been in no haste to punish us, as for more than a year they have left us in peace. But why do we waste our time in talking of this? De Kleist, we hold the king's secret, we must profit by it. How shall we set about it?"

"We must win over this Porporina, and we must hasten to do so before the king's favour shall have rendered her vain and distrustful."

"Beyond doubt we must spare neither presents, promises, nor cajoleries. You shall go to her to-morrow; you shall ask her from me for some music, the autographs of Porpora; she must have many unpublished things of the Italian masters. You shall promise her in return some manuscripts of Sebastian Bach: I have several. We will begin by exchanging; and then I will ask her to come and teach me the movements, and once I have her with me, I will undertake to win her over."

"I will go to-morrow morning, madame."

"Good night, De Kleist. Stay, come and kiss me. You are my only friend; go to bed, and if you meet *the sweeper* in the galleries, look well for spurs beneath her petticoats."

CHAPTER IV.

On the morrow, La Porporina, as she woke unrefreshed from a painful sleep, found upon her bed two things which the *femme-de-chambre* had just placed there: first, a crystal smelling-bottle with a gold top, upon which was engraved an F, surmounted by a royal coronet, and secondly, a sealed roll. Upon questioning the servant, she related how that the king had come in person, on the evening before, to bring this smelling-bottle; and as she learned the circumstances attending a visit so respectful and delicate, La Porporina was touched. Strange man! thought she, how can such goodness in private life be reconciled with so much harshness and despotism in his public career? She fell into a reverie, and by degrees forgetting the king, and thinking only of herself, she confusedly retraced the events of the preceding evening, and began to weep anew.

"Oh dear, mademoiselle!" said the maid, who was a good-natured talkative creature, "you are not going to sob again as you did last night when you were asleep. It is enough to break one's heart; and the king, who listened to you through the door, shook his head two or three times like a man in trouble. And yet, mademoiselle, your lot will make many envious. The king does not make love to every one; indeed, they say he never cared for any one, but it is very clear he is in love with you."

"In love with me! What are you saying, foolish girl?" cried La Porporina, trembling; "never repeat anything so absurd and unbecoming. The king in love with me!"

"Well, mademoiselle, what if he were?"

"Heaven preserve me! but it is not so, and never will be. What is this roll, Catherine?"

"A servant brought it early this morning."

"Whose servant?"

"A hired servant, who, at first, would not tell me from

whom he came; but who, in the end, confessed that he had been employed by the people of a certain Count Saint Germain, arrived here but yesterday."

"And why did you question this man?"

"That I might know who he was, mademoiselle."

"A good plain reason, certainly. You may leave me, Catherine."

As soon as La Porporina was alone, she opened the roll, and found in it a parchment covered with strange and illegible characters. She had heard the Count de Saint Germain much spoken of, but she did not know him. She turned the manuscript round and round, but being unable to make anything of it, and knowing no reason why this person, with whom she had never had any acquaintance, should send her an enigma to guess, she concluded, like many others, that he was mad. Still, as she further examined the parcel, she read upon a small detached leaf: "The Princess Amelia of Prussia is much interested in the science of magic, and in the casting of horoscopes. Give her this parchment, and you may rest assured of her protection and favour."

These lines bore no signature. The writing was unknown to her, and the roll had no address. She was surprised, that to obtain access to the Princess Amelia, the Count de Saint Germain should address himself to her, who had never approached her; and thinking that the servant must have made some mistake in bringing her the parcel, she proposed to roll it up again and send it back. But as she took up the piece of coarse white paper which had enveloped the whole, she observed that on the inner page there was some printed music. A sudden thought flashed through her mind. To look on the corner of the leaf for an agreed sign, to recognise it as having been strongly traced in pencil by herself, eighteen months before, to discern herself that the sheet of music belonged to the entire piece which she had given as a token of recognition; all this was but the affair of a moment; and the tenderness awakened by this remembrance from an absent and unfortunate friend, made her forget her own sorrows. It remained to discover what she was to do with the hieroglyphics, and with what design she was charged to deliver it to the Princess of Prussia. Was it indeed to assure her the favour and protection of this lady? If so, Porporina neither cared for it nor needed it. Was it to

establish between the princess and the prisoner a correspondence useful and solacing to this last? The young girl hesitated; she remembered the proverb: "Where there is doubt, abstain." Then she thought that this proverb had two aspects, the one favouring selfish prudence, the other courageous devotion. She rose, saying—

"'Where there is doubt, act,' when no one but yourself can be compromised, and when you may hope to be useful to your friend or a fellow-being."

She had scarcely completed her toilette, which she was slow in accomplishing, weakened as she was by the attack of the preceding evening, and was tying up her beautiful black hair, thinking of the means of insuring a quick and safe delivery of the parchment, when a tall valet, covered with lace, came to inquire if she were alone, and if she could receive a lady who did not wish to give her name, but who desired to speak with her. The young singer had often deplored this subjection to the great to which the artists of those times were exposed, but she resigned herself to this visit, and Madame de Kleist was quickly by her side.

This noble and accomplished lady had resolved to fascinate the singer, and to make her forget all the distances of rank; but she was embarrassed, because, on the one side, she had been told that this young girl was very proud, and on the other, being very curious for reasons of her own, Madame de Kleist would willingly have induced her to talk, that she might penetrate into the depths of her thoughts.

Though good-natured and inoffensive, this beautiful lady had, at that moment, a forced and unnatural expression, which did not escape La Porporina. Curiosity is so akin to perfidy, that it makes the most beautiful countenance repulsive.

La Porporina knew Madame de Kleist well by sight, and her first impulse, as she saw in her house a person who appeared every evening at the opera in the Princess Amelia's box, was to ask, under cover of necromancy, of which she knew she was very fond, for an interview with her mistress. But not daring to trust to one who had the reputation of being somewhat singular, and was said to be not a little intriguing, she resolved to see what the baroness would do; and, acting on the defensive, examined her with that tranquil penetration, so superior to the attacks of reckless curiosity.

At last the ice was broken, and the lady having presented the musical supplication of the princess, the singer hiding in some degree the satisfaction this happy concurrence of events occasioned her, ran to fetch several unpublished scores. Then, with a sudden inspiration, "Ah! madame," she cried, "I shall rejoice to lay all my little treasures at the feet of her highness, and I shall indeed be happy if she will grant me the favour of receiving them from my own hands."

"Do you, indeed, desire to speak with her royal highness, my lovely child?" said Madame de Kleist.

"Yes, madame," replied La Porporina; "I would throw myself at her feet, and ask her a favour, which I am sure she would not refuse me, for she is, they say, a great musician, and she should protect artists. They say, also, that she is as good as she is beautiful. I hope, therefore, that if she will deign to hear me, she will assist me in obtaining from his majesty the recall of my master, the illustrious Porpora, who, having been called to Berlin, with the consent of the king, was driven back and banished, as he set foot on the frontier, under pretence of some error in the form of his passport; since which time, in spite of the promises and assurances of his majesty, I have not been able to obtain a conclusion to this interminable affair. I dare not further importune the king with a request which can but slightly interest him, and which he always forgets, I am sure; but if the princess will deign to say a word to the officials charged to expedite these formalities, I shall at last have the happiness of being re-united to my adopted father, the only protector I have in the world."

"What you tell me greatly surprises me," cried Madame de Kleist. "What! the beautiful Porporina, whose influence I thought all-powerful upon the mind of the king, is obliged to have recourse to the protection of another to obtain a favour which appears so simple! Allow me to suppose, in that case, that his majesty fears, in your adopted father, as you call him, too severe a guardian, or too powerful an influence against himself."

"I try in vain, madame, to understand what you do me the honour to say to me," replied La Porporina, with a gravity which disconcerted Madame de Kleist.

"It would appear, then, that I am deceived as to the

extreme interest and unbounded admiration which the king professes for the greatest singer in the world."

"It does not become the dignity of Madame de Kleist," returned La Porporina, "to amuse herself at the expense of a poor, inoffensive, and unpretending artist."

"I amuse myself at your expense! Who would dream of such a thing with an angel like you? You are ignorant of your merits, mademoiselle, and your frankness fills me with surprise and admiration. I am sure you will make a conquest of the princess; she is a person of quick impulses. She only needs to see you near, to be as charmed with your person as she is already with your talents. I will take you back with me at once in my carriage, and present you and your music to the princess."

"And you think, madame, that she will receive me well?"

"Will you trust yourself to me?"

"But if you should be mistaken, madame, upon whom would the humiliation fall?"

"Upon me only; I will give you leave to proclaim everywhere that I boasted of the princess's friendship, and that she entertains for me neither esteem nor regard."

"I will follow you, madame," said La Porporina, ringing for her muff and cloak. "My toilette is very plain, but you will take me as I am."

"You are charming as you are, and you will find our dear princess in a still more simple *negligé*. Come!"

La Porporina put the mysterious roll into her pocket, filled Madame de Kleist's carriage with music, and resolutely followed, saying to herself, "For a man who has exposed his life for me, I may well expose myself to dance attendance for nothing upon this little princess."

Introduced into a dressing-room, she remained there alone for five minutes, during which the abbess and her *confidante* exchanged these few words in a neighbouring apartment.

"Madame, I have brought her to you: she is here."

"Already? oh! admirable ambassadress! How did she receive you? what kind of person is she?"

"Reserved, prudent, or silly; profoundly dissimulative, or marvellously stupid."

"Oh! we shall see!" cried the princess, whose eyes sparkled with the fire of a mind well practised in the exercise of penetration and suspicion; "let her come in."

During the short attendance in the dressing-room, La Porporina discovered with surprise the strangest collection that had ever decorated the sanctuary of a beautiful princess; globes, compasses, astrolabes, astrological charts, bottles filled with nameless mixtures, death's heads; in short, all the materials of sorcery. "My friend is not deceived," she thought, "and the public is well informed as to the secrets of the king's sister. She does not even appear to make a mystery of them, since she allows me to see these strange objects. Courage, courage!"

The Abbess of Quedlimberg was at that time about eight and twenty or thirty years of age. She had been extremely pretty; she was so still by lamplight and at a distance, but seen near, in broad daylight, La Porporina was surprised to find the bloom of her complexion faded and dimmed. Her blue eyes, which had been the most beautiful in the world, now surrounded by a circle of red, like those of a person who has just been weeping, displayed a sickly brilliancy and clearness, which inspired anything but confidence. She had been adored by her family and the whole court, and for a long time she was the most affable, the most joyous, the most courteous and kindly daughter of a king, whose portrait had ever been traced in the romances of great personages, in which the ancient patrician literature delighted. But for some years her character had undergone as great a change as her beauty. She was subject to attacks of temper, and even of violence, which gave her a resemblance to Frederick in his worst moods. Without seeking to take him as her model, and even while secretly criticising him, she was invincibly tempted to adopt the faults she blamed in her brother, and to become an imperious and absolute mistress, sceptical, biting, learned, narrow-minded, and disdainful. And yet amidst this grievous deterioration, which gained upon her every day more fatally, her native goodness was still manifest: an upright mind, a courageous spirit, an impassioned heart. What then was passing in the soul of this unhappy princess? A terrible grief devoured her, which she was obliged to stifle in her bosom, wearing a stoical and joyous air in the presence of a curious, ill-natured, or insensible throng. Thus, by means of perpetual restraint and disguise, she succeeded in developing within her two distinct beings; one which she dared scarcely reveal to any, the

other which she displayed with a species of hatred and despair. It was remarked that she had grown more lively and brilliant in conversation; but this forced and restless gaiety was painful to see, and it is impossible to describe the freezing and almost terrifying effect it produced. By turns sensitive to weakness, and hard to cruelty, she astonished others no less than she astonished herself. Torrents of tears would extinguish the fire of her passion, and then, suddenly, a ferocious irony, an impious disdain, would rouse her from those salutary depressions which her position did not permit her to encourage or exhibit.

The first thing which struck La Porporina as she approached her, was this species of duality in her being. The princess had two aspects, two faces: the one caressing, the other threatening; two voices: the one sweet and harmonious, which seemed to have been given her by heaven to sing like an angel; the other rough and hoarse, as though it issued from a burning chest, animated by the breath of a demon. Our heroine, filled with surprise at the sight of so singular a being, divided between fear and sympathy, asked herself if she were about to be taken captive by a good or a bad genius.

On her side, the princess found La Porporina much more formidable than she had expected. She had hoped that, apart from her professional costumes, and from that paint which helps to make women extremely ugly, whatever may be said to the contrary, she would justify what Madame de Kleist had told her, by way of encouragement, that she was rather plain than beautiful. But her clear olive complexion, so smooth and pure, her black eyes, so powerful yet so gentle, her mouth so fresh, her form so pliant, her natural and easy movements, the *tout ensemble* of a creature, honest, good, and full of tranquillity, or at least of that inward strength which true wisdom and probity gives, imposed upon the restless Amelia a sort of respect and even shame, as though she foresaw in her a being whose integrity was above all attack. The efforts she made to conceal her uneasiness were remarked by the young girl, who was astonished, as may well be believed, to see so noble a princess intimidated before her. She began then, as a means of reviving a conversation which kept dropping every moment, to open one of her scores, into which she had slipped the cabalistic letter, and she arranged it in such a manner that its coarse paper and its large

characters might attract the observation of the princess. As soon as the desired effect was produced, she pretended to be about to withdraw the sheet, as if she were surprised to find it there; but the abbess quickly took possession of it, exclaiming—

"What is this, mademoiselle? In the name of heaven, where does it come from?"

"If I must confess it to your highness," said La Porporina, with a significant air, "it is an astrological operation which I proposed to present to you, when it should please you to question me on a subject to which I am not altogether a stranger."

The princess fixed her eager eyes upon the singer, then carried them again to the magical characters, ran to a recess in a window, and, having examined the paper for a moment, uttered a loud cry, and fell like one suffocated into the arms of Madame de Kleist, who had flown towards her on perceiving her agitation.

"Go, mademoiselle," said the favourite, hurriedly, to La Porporina; "pass into this closet, and say nothing; do not call anyone, not anyone, do you hear?"

"No, no; do not let her go," said the princess, in a stifled voice; "let her come here; here, close to me. Ah, my child!" she cried, as soon as the young girl was by her side, "what a service you have rendered me!"

And seizing La Porporina in her thin white arms, with a convulsive strength, the princess pressed her to her heart, and covered her cheeks with such quick, sharp kisses, that the poor child felt her face bruised, while she herself was filled with consternation.

"Decidedly this country makes people mad," thought she; "I have feared several times that I should go mad myself, and I see that great persons are worse even than I am. There is insanity in the air."

The princess at length detached her arms from the neck of Porporina, to throw them around that of Madame de Kleist, crying, and weeping, and repeating in a singular voice, "Saved! saved! he is saved, my good friends! Trenck has escaped from the fortress of Glatz; he is at liberty; at this moment he flies from our enemies!"

And the poor princess fell into a fit of convulsive laughter, broken by sobs, painful to see and hear.

"Ah, madame! for the love of heaven, moderate your joy," said Madame de Kleist; "take care you are not overheard."

And picking up the pretended cabalistic formula, which was nothing less than a cipher letter from the Baron de Trenck, she assisted the princess to read it, who interrupted the perusal a thousand times by bursts of feverish and almost frantic joy.

CHAPTER V.

"To seduce the petty officers of the garrison, thanks to the means afforded me by my incomparable friend, to come to an understanding with a prisoner as eager for liberty as myself, to give a hearty blow to one guard, a kick to another, a sword-thrust to a third; to take a prodigious leap from the ramparts, precipitating my friend before me, who was too long making up his mind, and who, in falling, sprained his foot; to pick him up, to take him on my shoulders, to run thus for a quarter of an hour, to cross the Neisse in water above my waist, and in a fog so thick as to prevent my seeing beyond my nose; to fly again on the opposite shore through the whole night, and such a terrific night! To lose my way, to wander, in the snow, round a mountain, without knowing where I was; to hear four o'clock in the morning strike by the clock of Glatz! that is to say, to have lost my time and trouble, and at daybreak to find myself still beneath the walls of the city; to take courage, to enter the cottage of a peasant (with our pistols to his throat, to carry off two horses), to fly at full speed and at all risks; to gain our liberty by a thousand stratagems, a thousand alarms, a thousand sufferings, a thousand fatigues; and to find myself at last without money, without clothes, almost without food, in the most rigorous weather, in a strange country; but to feel myself free, after having been condemned to a terrible and eternal captivity; to think of an adorable friend, to know that this news will transport her with joy, to form a thousand audacious and delightful projects for approaching her; all this is to be hap-

pier than Frederick of Prussia, it is to be the happiest of men, the chosen of Providence."

Such was, in brief, the letter of the young Frederick de Trenck to the Princess Amelia; and the ease with which Madame de Kleist read it, proved to the surprised and affected Porporina, that this correspondence in cypher was not new to them. There was a postscript as follows:—

"The person who will deliver this letter to you is as trustworthy as the former messengers were faithless. You may, in short, confide unreservedly to her, and commit all your despatches for me to her care. The Count de Saint Germain will furnish her with the means of conveying them to me; but it is necessary that the said count, to whom I would not trust under all circumstances, should never hear you spoken of, and that he should think me smitten with the Signora Porporina, though there is nothing of the kind between us, as I have never entertained any other feeling towards her than that of pure and peaceable friendship. Let no cloud, then, obscure the beautiful brow of the divinity whom I adore. It is for her alone that I live, and I would rather die than deceive her."

While Madame de Kleist deciphered this postcript aloud, pausing upon every word, the Princess Amelia attentively examined the features of La Porporina, trying to detect an expression of grief, humiliation, or anger. But the angelic serenity of that excellent creature entirely re-assured her, and she once more overwhelmed her with caresses, exclaiming—

"And I suspected you, my poor child! You do not know how jealous I have been of you, how I have hated and cursed you! I was determined to think you ugly and a bad actress, because I feared to think you but too beautiful and good. And this because my brother, dreading to see me intimate with you, while pretending to desire your presence at my concerts, took care to make me understand that at Vienna you had been the idol of Trenck. He knew well that this was the way to separate me from you for ever. And I believed it, while you were devoting yourself to the greatest dangers to bring me this happy news! You do not love the king, then? Ah! you are right; he is the most perverse and the most cruel of men!"

"Oh! madame, madame!" said Madame de Kleist,

frightened at the *abandon* and the delirious volubility with which the princess spoke in the presence of La Porporina; "to what dangers are you not exposing yourself at this moment, if mademoiselle were not an angel of courage and devotion."

"True, true; I am in such a state of excitement, I believe I am out of my senses. Close the doors well, De Kleist, and see first of all that no one has been listening in the antechambers. As for her," added the princess, pointing to La Porporina, "look at her, and tell me if it be possible to doubt a face like that? No, no! I am not so imprudent as I appear, dear Porporina; do not believe that I spoke to you thus openly from forgetfulness, nor that I shall repent of it when I grow calm. My instincts are infallible, my child. My first impressions never deceive me. This faculty runs in the family, and my brother, the king, who piques himself upon it, does not surpass me in this respect. No, you will not betray me; I see it, I know it! You will not betray a woman, the victim of an unfortunate attachment, and who has suffered what no one can conceive."

"Oh! madame, never," said La Porporina, kneeling before her, as if to take God to witness her oath. "Neither you, nor M. de Trenck, who saved my life, nor any one else in the world."

"He saved your life? Ah! I am sure he has saved the lives of many others! He is so good, so brave, so handsome! He is very handsome, is he not? But you cannot have looked at him, or you must have fallen in love with him, and you are not in love with him, are you? You shall tell me how you came to know him, and how he saved your life; but not now, I could not listen to you. I must talk, or my heart will burst. It has lain silent in my breast too long! I must talk on; leave me alone, De Kleist; my joy must find vent, or it will kill me. Only shut the doors, keep watch, and protect and take care of me. Pardon me, my dear friends, for I am very, very happy." And the princess melted into tears. "You know," she continued, after a few moments' silence, but in a voice broken by tears, and with an agitation nothing could calm, "you know he pleased me from the first day I saw him. He was eighteen years old, beautiful as an angel, and so clever, so frank, so brave! They wanted me to marry the King of Sweden.

Ah, yes! and my sister Ulrica cried with vexation to see me become a queen while she remained single. 'My good sister,' I said to her, 'there is a means of arranging this matter. The nobles who govern Sweden desire a Catholic queen, and I will not abjure my faith. They desire a good little queen, indolent and tranquil, a stranger to all politics; if I were a queen I would reign; I will speak openly on these points before the ambassadors, and you will see that to-morrow they will write to the prince and tell him it is you who will suit Sweden, and not I.' I did as I said, and my sister is the Queen of Sweden. Since that day I have never ceased to act a part. Ah, Porporina! you think you are an actress? No, you know not what it is to act through the whole of one's life, morning and evening, all through the day, and often all night. For all who breathe around us are intent on divining what we wish to conceal. I was obliged to affect anger and grief when, through my own work, my sister stole the throne of Sweden from me. I was obliged to pretend to detest Trenck, to think him ridiculous, to mock at him, and that at the very time I adored him, when I was intoxicated with happiness, as I am now. Ah! more than now, alas! But Trenck did not possess my strength and prudence. He was not born a prince, he knew not how to lie and dissimulate as I did. The king discovered all, and, following the custom of kings, he lied also, and pretended to see nothing; but he persecuted Trenck, and this handsome page, his favourite, became the object of his hatred and fury. He overwhelmed him with humiliations and hardships. He placed him under arrest seven days out of eight, but on the eighth Trenck was in my arms, for nothing terrified, nothing daunted him. How was it possible not to adore such courage? Well, the king conceived a design of confiding to him a foreign mission, and, when he had fulfilled it with equal skill and promptitude, my brother had the infamy to accuse him of having delivered the plans of our fortresses and the secrets of war to his cousin, Trenck, the Hungarian, who is in the service of Maria Theresa. This was to be the means not only of separating him from me by perpetual captivity, but of dishonouring him, and causing him to perish with grief, despair, and rage, amidst the horrors of a dungeon. See whether I have cause to esteem and bless my brother! He is said to be a great man.

I tell you that he is a monster! Ah beware how you love him, young girl, for he will break you as a reed. But you must pretend to love him, nevertheless, for in the air in which we live we must draw our very breath in secret. I pretend to adore my brother; I am his beloved sister; every one knows this, or thinks he knows it. He pays me all sorts of petty attentions. He gathers cherries with his own hand at Sans-Souci, and goes without them himself, though he cares for no other luxury in the world, that he may send them to me, and before intrusting them to the page who brings me the basket, he counts them that none may be eaten on the way. What a delicate attention! What simplicity! Worthy of Henry IV. and King Reni. But he leaves my lover to perish in a dungeon while he seeks to dishonour him in my eyes as a punishment for my having loved him! What a noble heart, and what a good brother! It is thus we love each other!"

While speaking, the princess turned pale, her voice grew weaker and weaker till it finally ceased; her eyes became fixed, starting from their sockets; and she remained motionless, silent, and livid. She had lost all consciousness. La Porporina, terrified, assisted Madame de Kleist to undress her and put her to bed, where she somewhat recovered, and continued to murmur unintelligible words.

"The attack is passing away, thank Heaven!" said Madame de Kleist to the singer. "As for you, my dear child, you must go into the *salon de musique*, and sing to the walls, or rather for the ears of the ante-chamber. For the king will be sure to know that you have been here, and you must not seem to have any other business with the princess than that of music. The princess must feign to be indisposed, that will help to conceal her joy. She must not appear to know of Trenck's escape, nor you either. The king knows it already, that is certain. He will be angry enough, his suspicions will be aroused against every one. Take care of yourself! You are lost as well as I, if he discovers that you have brought this letter to the princess; and in this country, women, no less than men, are committed to the fortress; where, like men, they are purposely forgotten; where, like men, they also die. And now you are warned, adieu! Sing, and then take your departure without noise and without mystery. To

avoid all suspicion, eight days at least must elapse before we see you again. Rely upon the gratitude of the princess. She is munificent, and knows how to reward devotion."

"Alas, madame," said La Porporina, sadly, "you think, then, that threats and promises are necessary with me? I pity you for entertaining such a thought!"

Overwhelmed with fatigue from the violent scenes in which she had just borne a part, and still suffering from her own emotion of the preceding evening, La Porporina, nevertheless, placed herself at the harpsichord, and began singing, when a door opened behind her so gently, that she did not perceive it, till suddenly she saw, in a glass close to the instrument, the figure of the king by her side. She trembled and would have risen; but the king, pressing her shoulders with the tips of his hard, dry fingers, obliged her to remain seated, and continue her singing. She obeyed with considerable repugnance and anxiety; never had she felt less disposed to sing; never had the presence of Frederick seemed to be more freezing and more opposed to musical inspiration.

"That is sung to perfection," said the king, when she had finished her piece, during which she had remarked with terror, that he had gone, upon tip-toe, to listen behind the half-open door of his sister's bedchamber. "But, I observe with regret," he added, "that your beautiful voice is slightly affected this morning. You should have rested yourself, instead of yielding to the strange caprice of the Princess Amelia, who has caused you to come hither that she may not listen to you, as it seems."

"Her royal highness found herself suddenly indisposed," replied the young girl, terrified at the suspicious and gloomy air of the king; "I was desired to continue my singing for her amusement."

"I can assure you it is trouble thrown away, for she is not listening to you at all," said the king, drily; "she is in there, whispering with Madame de Kleist, as though you were not present; and since it is so we can whisper together here, without troubling ourselves about them. Her illness does not appear to be serious. I think your sex passes very quickly, in this respect, from one extreme to another. You were thought to be dead yesterday evening; who would have dreamed, therefore, of seeing you here this morning, nursing

and amusing my sister? Will you have the goodness to tell me what chance brought you hither so unexpectedly?"

La Porporina, bewildered by this question, implored inspiration from heaven.

"Sire," she replied, forcing herself to take courage; "I scarcely know myself. I was asked this morning for the score you see before me, and I thought it my duty to bring it in person. I intended to deposit my books in the ante-chamber and to return at once, but Madame de Kleist perceiving me, named me to her highness, who, it appears, was desirous to see me off the stage. I was obliged to enter. Her highness deigned to question me upon the style of various pieces of music, then, feeling ill, ordered me to sing to her while she was getting into bed. And now, perhaps, she will be pleased to dismiss me for the rehearsal."

"It is not yet time," said the king. "I know not what possesses you to fly whenever I desire to speak with you:"

"It is because I always fear to be troublesome to your majesty."

"You have no common sense, my dear."

"That is a reason the more for my desiring to withdraw, sire."

"You will remain," he replied, obliging her to seat herself at the piano; and standing before her, he added, examining her with a half-fatherly, half-inquisitorial air; "is all you have just told me true?"

La Porporina overcame the horror she felt at uttering a falsehood. She had often determined to be sincere with this terrible man where she was herself concerned; but that she would not shrink from deceiving him if ever the welfare of his victims should be in question. She saw herself suddenly arrived at that crisis, when the patronage of the master might be turned into fury. She would willingly have made the sacrifice rather than descend to dissimulation; but the fate of Trenck and that of the princess depended upon her presence of mind and intelligence. She called the art of the actress to her assistance, and sustained, with a malicious smile, the eagle glance of the king—it was rather that of the vulture at this moment.

"Well," said the king, "why do you not reply to me?"

"Why does your majesty seek to frighten me by pretending to doubt what I have just said?"

"You do not look frightened in the least. On the contrary, I think you look very bold this morning."

"Sire, we are only afraid of what we hate. Why would you have me fear you?"

Frederick bristled up his crocodile's armour that he might not be moved by this reply, the most coquettish he had ever obtained from La Porporina. According to custom he immediately changed the subject—an art more difficult than is imagined.

"Why did you faint yesterday evening at the theatre?"

"Sire, that cannot be of any interest to your majesty, while it is my secret."

"What have you eaten for breakfast, that your tongue is so free with me this morning?"

"I have inhaled a certain smelling-bottle which has filled me with confidence in the goodness and justice of him who brought it to me."

"Ah! you have taken that for a declaration," said Frederick, in an icy tone, and with cynical contempt.

"Thank God, I have not!" replied the girl, with an impulse of genuine terror.

"Why do you say, thank God?"

"Because I know that your majesty makes none but declarations of war, even to ladies."

"You are neither the Czarina, nor Maria Theresa; what war can I have with you?"

"That which the lion might have with the gnat."

"And what gnat stings you, to quote such a fable? The gnat killed the lion by irritating it."

"Doubtless it was a poor lion, passionate, and consequently weak. I could not, therefore, have been thinking of that apologue."

"But the gnat was sharp and stinging. It may be that the apologue suits you?"

"Does your majesty think so?"

"Yes."

"Sire, you speak falsely."

Frederick took the young girl's hand in his own, and pressed it convulsively, even bruising it. There was both anger and love in this singular action. La Porporina did not change countenance, and the king added, looking at her red and swollen hand—

"You are courageous."

"No, sire; but I do not pretend to want courage, like all those who surround you."

"What do you mean?"

"That death is often feigned as a means to escape being killed. Were I in your place, I should not like to be thought so terrible."

"With whom are you in love?" said the king, once more changing the subject.

"With no one, sire."

"Then why are you subject to nervous attacks?"

"That does not concern the fate of Prussia, consequently the king does not care to know it."

"Do you think, then, that it is the king who is speaking to you?"

"It is impossible for me to forget it."

"You must do so, however. It is never the king who addresses you; it was not the king whose life you saved, mademoiselle."

"But I have not found the Baron de Kreutz here."

"Is this a reproach? If so, it is unjust. The king would not have gone yesterday to inquire after your health. It was Captain Kreutz who went."

"The distinction is too subtle for me, monsieur le capitaine."

"Well, try to learn it. Stay, when I put my hat on my head, thus, a little to the left, I am the captain; and when I put it on like this, to the right, I am the king; and according to what I am, you will be Consuelo, or Mademoiselle Porporina."

"I hear, sire, but it is impossible. Your majesty is free to personate two, three, or a hundred, but I can only be one."

"It is false! you would not speak to me upon the stage, before your companions, as you speak to me here."

"That is because your majesty's hat is neither to the right nor the left, and I know not to whom I speak."

The king, vanquished by the attraction he felt, especially at that moment, towards La Porporina, carried his hand to his hat with a joyous good-humour, and inclined it to the left, with such exaggeration, that his terrible face became quite comic. He wished to play the simple mortal, and the king at his ease, as much as possible; but suddenly remembering that he had

come there, not to seek diversion from his cares, but to penetrate into the secrets of the Abbess of Quedlimberg, he took off his hat altogether, with a sudden and angry movement; the smile died upon his lips, his brow became gloomy, and he rose, saying to the young girl: "Remain here; I will rejoin you;" and passed into the chamber of the princess, who was awaiting his approach in trembling dismay.

Madame de Kleist, having seen him talking with La Porporina, had not dared to stir from her mistress's bed. She had tried in vain to overhear their conversation, but being unable to catch a word from the great size of the apartment, she was now more dead than alive with terror.

On her side, La Porporina trembled at what was about to take place. Usually grave and respectfully sincere with the king, she had just done herself violence in the hope of turning him, by her free yet somewhat affected coquetry, from the dangerous interrogation to which he had begun to subject her. She desired to prevent his tormenting his unfortunate sister; but Frederick was not a man to be turned aside from his purpose, and the efforts of the poor girl were wrecked before the obstinacy of the despot. She commended the Princess Amelia to God, for she felt that the king had bid her remain there, that he might compare her explanations with those about to be given to him in the neighbouring apartment. Her doubts were confirmed when she saw the care with which Frederick passed through and closed the door behind him. She remained there for a quarter of an hour in painful expectation, feverish and agitated, frightened at the intrigue by which she saw herself surrounded, discontented with the part she had been obliged to play, reviewing with terror the insinuations which met her on every side, as to the possibility of the king's love for her, and the species of agitation which the king himself had just betrayed in his singular manners.

CHAPTER VI.

But was it ever known that the skill of the most terrible Dominican who ever fulfilled the functions of grand inquisitor, prevailed against that of three women, where love,

fear, and friendship inspire each with the same object? Frederick tried every means in his power by caressing amiability, and by provoking irony; by unexpected questions, by feigned indifference, by indirect threats; yet none of these availed. The explanation of Consuelo's presence in the princess's apartments agreed exactly, in the mouth of Madame de Kleist and in the affirmations of Amelia, with that which La Porporina had so happily invented. It was at once the most natural and the most probable. To put everything down to chance is the best way. Chance can neither speak nor give the lie.

Tired of the conflict, the king either abandoned his project or changed his tactics; for he suddenly cried—

"And La Porporina, whom I am forgetting all this time. Dear sister, since you are feeling better, let her come in; her prattle will amuse us."

"I wish to sleep," replied the princess, who dreaded some snare.

"Well, then, wish her good morning and dismiss her in person." As he thus spoke, the king, preceding Madame de Kleist, went himself to open the door, and called La Porporina.

But instead of dismissing her, he commenced at once a dissertation on German and Italian music; and when the subject was exhausted, he suddenly cried—

"Oh! Signora Porporina! one piece of news I have forgotten to tell you, and which will certainly cause you great pleasure. Your friend, the Baron de Trenck, is no longer a prisoner."

"What Baron de Trenck, sire?" asked the young girl, with an affected frankness. "I know two, both are in prison."

"Oh! Trenck the Hungarian, perished at Spielberg. It is Trenck the Prussian who has made his escape."

"Well, sire," replied La Porporina, "as far as I am concerned, I return you thanks. Your majesty has performed a just and generous act."

"I am much obliged for the compliment, mademoiselle. What do you think of it, my dear sister?"

"Of what are you speaking?" said the princess. "I have not been listening to you, brother. I was just falling asleep."

"I speak of your *protégé*, the handsome Trenck, who has escaped from Glatz by scaling the walls."

"Ah! he has done well," replied Amelia, with the most perfect *sang froid*.

"He has done ill," replied the king, drily. "His cause was about to be examined, and he might, perhaps, have justified himself from the charges which hang over him. His flight is the confession of his crimes."

"If it be thus, I give him up," said Amelia, coldly.

"Mademoiselle Porporina will persist in defending him, I am sure," replied Frederick; "I see it in her eyes."

"That is because I do not believe in the treason," said she.

"Especially where the traitor is a handsome young fellow! Do you know, sister, that Mademoiselle Porporina is very intimately connected with the Baron de Trenck?"

"Much good may it do her!" said Amelia, coldly; "but if he be a dishonored man, I should advise her to forget him. And now I wish you good morning, mademoiselle, for I am feeling greatly fatigued. I beg you will be so good as to return in a few days to assist me in reading this score; it appears to be very beautiful."

"You have recovered your taste for music, then?" said the king. "I thought you had entirely given it up."

"It is my wish to recover it, and I hope, brother, you will come and assist me to do so. They tell me you have made great progress, so now you can give me a few lessons."

"We will take them together from the signora. I will bring her to you."

"You will confer a great pleasure upon me by so doing."

Madame de Kleist re-conducted La Porporina as far as the antechamber, when she suddenly found herself alone in the long corridors, scarcely knowing how to direct her steps so as to leave the palace, and forgetting the way by which she had entered.

The king's household was appointed with the strictest economy, to say nothing more, and but few servants were to be met with in the interior of the palace. La Porporina could not find one to direct her, and went wandering at hazard in that vast and gloomy mansion.

Pre-occupied with what had just occurred, overcome with fatigue, and fasting since the preceding evening, La Por-

porina felt herself greatly weakened; and as sometimes happens in similar cases, an unhealthy excitement alone sustained her physical strength. She walked on at hazard, but much faster than she would have done in a healthy state; and haunted by an idea, entirely personal, which had strangely tormented her since the night before, she completely forgot in what place she was, became bewildered; crossed galleries and courts; retraced her steps; descended and re-ascended staircases; met several persons; thought no longer of asking her way; and found herself at last, as though issuing from a dream, at the entrance of a vast apartment, filled with singular and confused objects, on the threshold of which a grave and polite personage saluted her with much courtesy, inviting her to enter.

La Porporina recognised the very learned academician, Stoss, keeper of the museum and librarian of the palace. He had been at her house several times, for the purpose of getting her to try certain precious manuscripts of Protestant music belonging to the earliest times of the Reformation: caligraphic treasures with which he had himself enriched the royal collection. On learning that she was seeking a way out of the palace, he offered to escort her home, but in the same breath he begged her so earnestly to look at the precious cabinet confided to his care, and of which he was justly proud, that she could not refuse to walk round it, leaning on his arm. Like all artists, easily amused, she quickly took more interest in the collection than she had thought herself disposed to do, and her attention was entirely absorbed by an object which the worthy professor particularly recommended to her notice.

"This drum, which at first sight has nothing remarkable about it," he said to her, "and which I even suspect to be an apocryphal relic, enjoys, nevertheless, a great celebrity. One thing certain is, that the sounding part of this warlike instrument is formed of human skin, as even you may observe by the veinous peculiarities of its face and texture. This trophy, carried off from Prague by his majesty in the glorious war he has just terminated, is, they say, the skin of Jean Ziska du Calice, the celebrated chief of the great Hussite insurrection in the fifteenth century. They declare that he bequeathed this sacred relic to his companions in arms, promising them, that wherever it was, there also

should victory be. The Bohemians pretend that the sound of this formidable drum puts their enemies to flight, that it invokes the shades of their dead chiefs to combat in the holy cause, with a thousand other marvels. But besides that in this brilliant age of reason in which we have the happiness to live, such superstitions deserve only contempt, M. Lenfant, chaplain to her majesty the queen-mother, and author of an admirable history of the Hussites, affirms that Jean Ziska was buried in his skin, and that consequently—but you are pale, mademoiselle. Are you suffering, or does the sight of this strange object cause you disgust? This Ziska was a great rascal, and a very ferocious rebel."

"It is possible, monsieur," replied La Porporina; "but I have lived in Bohemia, and I have heard that he was a very great man; his memory is almost as fresh there as that of Louis XIV. can possibly be in France, and he is looked upon as the saviour of his country."

"Alas! it is but a miserable country," replied M. Stoss, smiling; "and were I to strike the sonorous chest of its liberator, I should not even cause his shadow to appear, disgracefully imprisoned as it is, in the palace of the conquerors of his descendants."

As he spoke thus, in a pedantic tone, the worthy M. Stoss struck his fingers against the drum, which sent forth a dull and gloomy sound, like that produced by instruments covered with crape when they are but feebly struck in funeral marches. But the learned librarian was suddenly interrupted in this profane amusement by a piercing cry from La Porporina, who threw herself into his arms, hiding her face upon his shoulder, like a child terrified at some singular or frightful object.

The grave M. Stoss looked around him for the cause of this sudden alarm, and saw standing at the threshold of the room, a person whose appearance caused him a feeling of disdain. He was about to make a sign to this person to depart, but he had already disappeared before La Porporina, still clinging to him, had left him at liberty to move.

"Indeed, mademoiselle," said he, conducting her to a chair, into which she fell trembling and overcome, "I do not understand what has happened to you. I saw nothing to account for the emotion you display?"

"You have seen nothing, you have seen no one?" said

La Porporina, in a faint voice, and with a bewildered look; "there, at the door, you did not see a man stop, who looked at me with terrible eyes?"

"I saw distinctly a man who often wanders about the palace, and who would be very likely to put on terrible looks, as you say; but I confess to you that he does not alarm me, and that I am not one of his dupes."

"You have seen him? Ah, monsieur! then he was there, indeed, and I did not dream it? What does it mean?"

"It means, that in virtue of the special protection of an amiable and august princess, who, I believe, amuses herself with his follies far more than she places faith in them, this man has the *entré* of the palace, and frequents the apartments of her royal highness."

"But who is he, what is his name?"

"You do not know! Whence then your fear?"

"In the name of heaven, monsieur, tell me who is this man?"

"That is soon done," replied Stoss, "it is Trismegistus, the Princess Amelia's sorcerer; one of those chartalans who get their living by predicting the future, and revealing hidden treasures; by making gold, and a thousand other fashionable tricks, which were greatly in vogue here before the glorious reign of Frederick the Great. You have doubtless heard, signora, that the Abbess de Quedlimberg preserves this taste?"

"Yes, yes, monsieur! I know she studies magic; from curiosity, without doubt."

"Oh! certainly. How can one suppose that a princess, so well informed, so enlightened, should seriously interest herself with such absurdities?"

"In short, monsieur, you know this man?"

"I have known him for some time; for the last four years he has appeared here once at least in every six or eight months. As he is very peaceable, and meddles in no intrigues, his majesty, who would not deprive his beloved sister of any innocent amusement, tolerates his presence in the town, and even his free entrance to the palace. He does not abuse this privilege, and only exercises his pretended science in this country in the presence of her highness. M. de Golowkin protects, and is security for him. This is all I can tell you about him: but how can it interest you so deeply, mademoiselle?"

"It does not interest me at all, monsieur, I assure you; and lest you should think me mad, I am bound to tell you, though it was doubtless an illusion, that this man appeared to me to bear a striking resemblance to some one who was very dear to me, and who is so still, for death has no power over affection, has it, monsieur?"

"It is a noble sentiment you have just uttered, mademoiselle, and every way worthy of a person of your merit. But you were greatly agitated, and even now you can scarcely support yourself. Allow me to see you to your house."

Arrived at home, La Porporina went straight to bed, and remained there for several days, tormented by fever, and an extraordinary nervous excitement. At the end of this time, she received a note from Madame de Kleist, inviting her to come and sing at her house, at eight o'clock that evening. This singing was but a pretext for conducting her in secret to the palace. They reached the princess's apartments by private passages, and found her elegantly dressed, though the room in which she sat was dimly lighted, and all her attendants were dismissed for the evening, under pretext of indisposition. She received the singer with a thousand caresses; and passing her arm familiarly through her own, conducted her to a pretty little rotunda, lighted by fifty wax candles, in which was served a dainty and luxurious supper of exquisite taste. The French rococo had not yet found its way to the Prussian court. Moreover, a sovereign contempt was at this period affected for the court of France, while the traditions of the Louis XIV. age were closely imitated, for which Frederick, secretly occupied in copying the great king, professed a boundless admiration. Nevertheless, the Princess Amelia was dressed in the most perfect taste, and though more soberly attired than Madame de Pompadour was accustomed to be, she was no less brilliant. Madame de Kleist was also most charmingly dressed, and yet there were but three covers on the table, and not a single servant present.

"You are amazed at our little *fête*," said the princess, laughing; "well, you will be more so presently, when you learn that we three are going to sup together, and wait upon ourselves; Madame de Kleist and I having already prepared supper. It was I who laid the table and lighted the candles,

and I never was so amused before. For the first time in my life, I have dressed without any assistance, and it seems to me, I was never better attired. Come, we will amuse ourselves *incognito!* The king sleeps at Potsdam, the queen is at Charlottenbourg, my sisters are with the queen-mother at Montbijou; my brothers are I know not where, and we are alone in the palace. I have declared myself ill, and I avail myself of this night of liberty to enjoy life a little, and to celebrate with you two (the only persons in the world in whom I can trust) the escape of my dear Trenck. Thus we will drink champagne to his health, and if one of us should commit an excess, the others must keep the secret. Ah! the fine philosophical suppers of Frederick are about to be eclipsed by the splendour and gaiety of this!"

They placed themselves at table, and the princess showed herself under a new aspect to La Porporina. She was kind, sympathetic, unaffected, joyous, beautiful as an angel; in a word, adorable on that particular occasion, as she had been in the brightest days of early youth. She seemed to float in happiness, and this happiness was pure, disinterested, and generous. Her lover, flying from his enemies, far from her, she knew not if she should ever again see him; but he was free, he had ceased to suffer, and the princess, radiant with happiness, blessed her destiny.

"Ah, how happy I feel between you two!" she said to her confidants, who, with herself, formed the most lovely trio that a refined coquetry had ever presented to the eyes of men. "I feel myself at this moment free as Trenck; I feel as good as he has ever been, and as I never thought to be again! It was as though the fortress of Glatz weighed upon my soul: at night it haunted me like a nightmare. I shivered with cold in my luxurious bed, as I thought of him I loved stretched upon the damp pavement of a gloomy dungeon. I could no longer enjoy life. Ah! dear Porporina, imagine the horror of saying to oneself, 'He suffers all this for my sake! it is my fatal love which has consigned him to a living tomb!' This thought changed every thing into gall, as with the breath of the Harpies. Give me some champagne, Porporina; I have never liked it, it is two years since I drank anything but water, and yet it seems to me now as though I were drinking nectar. The light of the candles is joyous, the scent of these flowers is delicious, these viands are

exquisite, and, above all, you and De Kleist are as beautiful as two angels! Oh, yes! I see, I hear, I breathe; from the statue, from the corpse that I was, I have returned to life. Stay, drink first of all with me to the health of Trenck, and then to that of the friend who has fled with him; afterwards we will drink to the health of the brave keepers who allowed him to escape, and finally to that of my brother Frederick, who could not prevent him from so doing. No; no bitter thought shall disturb this night's festivity. I feel as though I had no bitterness against any one, I even feel as though I loved the king. Hold! to the king's health, Porporina, *Vive le roi!*"

The happiness which the joy of this poor princess communicated to her two beautiful guests, was completed by the charm of her manners and the perfect equality which she insisted upon establishing between them. She rose from the table when her turn came, changed the plates, carved with her own hands, and helped her companions with a childish and touching pleasure. "Ah! if I were not borne for a life of equality, at least love has made me understand it," said she, "and the misfortunes of my condition have revealed to me the absurdity of the prejudices of rank and birth. My sisters are not like me. My sister D'Anspach would rather walk to the scaffold than make the first bow to a non-reigning princess. My sister De Bareith, who plays the philosopher and the wit with M. Voltaire, would tear out the eyes of a duchess who dared to wear an inch more of silk in her train than she carries in hers. This is because they have never loved! They pass their lives in that exhausted air-machine which they call the dignity of their rank. They will die embalmed in their majesty like mummies; they will not have known my bitter sufferings, it is true, but neither will they have known, in the whole course of their lives of etiquette and display, one quarter of an hour of freedom, of pleasure and confidence, like that which I am enjoying at the present moment! My dear friends, you must render this *fête* complete; you must *tutoyer* me this evening. I will be Amelia to you; let us have no more of highness, but simply Amelia. Ah! thy looks are already refusing me, De Kleist. The court has spoiled thee, my child; spite of thyself thou hast imbibed its poisonous air; but thou, dear Porporina, who, though an actress, appearest to be a child of nature, thou wilt yield to my innocent desire."

"Yes, my dear Amelia, I will with all my heart, to oblige thee," replied La Porporina, laughing.

"Ah, Heaven!" cried the princess, "didst thou but know the effect that this *tutoyer* produces upon me, and to hear myself called Amelia! Amelia! ah, how well he pronounced my name! In his lips it seemed to me the most beautiful name upon earth, the sweetest woman ever bore."

By degrees the princess carried her excitement to such an extent as to forget herself in her attention to her friends, and in this trial of equality she felt so exalted, so happy, and so kindly, that she instinctively dropped the bitterness which suffering and passion had developed within her. She ceased to speak exclusively of herself, and no longer thought of taking merit to herself for being so amiable and simple, she questioned Madame de Kleist as to her family, her position, and her feelings, a thing which she had not done since she had been so absorbed in her own griefs. She desired also to know something of the life of an artist; of the emotions of the stage; of the ideas and affections of La Porporina. She inspired confidence in the same degree as she experienced it, and it was with infinite pleasure that she read the souls of others, and found at last in those beings hitherto so far removed from her, creatures resembling her in their essence, her equals before God, as highly gifted by nature as herself, and as important in the world, where she had hitherto flattered herself she was superior to all others.

It was La Porporina, above all, whose ingenuous replies and frank sympathy inspired her with a respect mingled with surprise.

"Thou art an angel," she said to her. "Thou, an actress! Thou speakest and thinkest more nobly than any crowned head I have known. I feel for thee an esteem amounting almost to infatuation. Thou must award me thy confidence frankly and freely, beautiful Porporina; thou must open thy heart to me; relate to me thy life, thy birth, thy education, thy loves, thy misfortunes, even thy faults if ever thou hast committed any. They cannot be other than noble faults, like those I bear, not on my conscience, as they say, but in the sanctuary of my heart. It is but eleven o'clock, we have the whole night before us; our little orgie draws to a close, for we no longer do anything but gossip, and I see the second bottle of champagne will be neglected. Wilt thou do as I

ask? I cannot but think that a knowledge of thy heart, and the relation of a life where all will be new and fresh to me, will teach me more of the true duties of this world than all the reflections I could ever make. I feel that I can listen to thee and follow thee, as I have never yet been able to listen to what did not concern my passion. Wilt thou satisfy me?"

"With all my heart, madame," replied La Porporina.

"What lady art thou addressing? Whence this madame?" interrupted the princess, gaily.

"I say, my dear Amelia," returned La Porporina, "that I would do so with pleasure, if there were not in my life an important, nay, an almost formidable secret, upon which everything turns, and which no desire for confidence, no expansion of the heart, may permit me to reveal."

"Well, my child, I know thy secret; and if I have not spoken of it during supper, it has been from a sense of delicacy which I now feel my friendship for thee may supersede."

"You know my secret!" cried La Porporina, petrified with surprise, "Oh! madame, forgive me, but it appears impossible."

"A forfeit! Thou dost treat me ever as a princess."

"Forgive me, Amelia; but thou canst not know my secret; at least, unless thou art really in league with Cagliostro, as is said."

"I have heard of thy adventure with Cagliostro; I die with eagerness to learn the details; it is not curiosity which prompts me this evening, but friendship, as I have honestly told thee. Thus, to encourage thee, I will tell thee that since this morning I have learned that La Signora Consuelo Porporina may legitimately take, if she will, the title of Countess de Rudolstadt."

"In the name of Heaven! madame—Amelia, who can have told thee?"

"My dear Rudolstadt, thou dost not know then that my sister, the Margravine de Bareith, is here?"

"Yes, I know she is."

"And with her, her physician, Supperville?"

"I understand now; M. Supperville has broken his word, his oath. He has revealed all."

"Do not be alarmed. He has revealed it but to me, and under the seal of secrecy. Neither can I see why thou

shouldst dread an affair becoming known which is honourable to thy character, and which can no longer prove injurious to any one. The family of Rudolstadt is extinct, with the exception of the old canoness, who cannot be long before she rejoins her brothers in the tomb. We have, it is true, in Saxony, princes of Rudolstadt, who are thy near relations, thy cousins-germain, and who are proud of their name; but if my brother will support thee thou shalt bear that name without their daring to complain, at least, if thou dost not persist in preferring thine own of Porporina, which is equally glorious, and much sweeter to the ear?"

"Such is, indeed, my intention," replied the singer, "whatever may happen; but I would know for what reason M. Supperville told this history to you. When I know that, and my conscience is released from its oath, I promise to relate the details of this sad and singular marriage."

"Here are the facts," said the princess. "One of my women being ill, I begged Supperville, who, they told me, was in the palace with my sister, to come and see her. Supperville is a man of talent; I knew him well when he lived here. He never liked my brother, and the knowledge of this circumstance put me at my ease in talking with him. Chance led the conversation to music, to the opera, and, finally to thyself. I spoke of thee in such terms of praise that, whether to please me, or from a conviction of thy merit, he went far beyond me, and extolled thee to the skies. I took pleasure in listening to him, and remarked a certain peculiarity of manner which made me feel that there was in thy existence a romance full of interest, and a grandeur of soul superior even to the high opinion I had formed of thee. I pressed him hard, I must confess; and I must further add, in his justification that it was long before he yielded. At last, having required my word of honour that I would not betray him, he related to me thy marriage with the Count de Rudolstadt on his death-bed, and the generous renunciation which thou hast made of all thy rights and privileges. Thou seest, my child, that thou canst, without scruple, tell me the rest, if nothing further engages thee to conceal it from me."

"That being the case," said La Porporina, after a moment of silence and emotion, "though this recital cannot but

awaken painful remembrances, above all, since my stay at Berlin, I will repay by my confidence, the interest of your highness—I would say, of my kind and dear Amelia."

[This narrative is omitted, as it has already appeared in "Consuelo."]

CHAPTER VII.

"FULL of strange vicissitudes, indeed, is the life of an artist," said the princess, wiping away a tear; for La Porporina sobbed as she finished her history. "But you do not tell me, dear Consuelo, the most noble trait in your life, and one which Supperville imformed me of with the highest admiration; that you might not afflict the old canoness nor fail in your romantic disinterestedness, you renounced your title, your dowry, your very name; you required that your secret should be kept by Supperville and Porpora, the sole witnesses of this precipitate marriage, and you came here, poor as before, Zingarella as of old."

"And an artist for ever!" replied Consuelo; "that is to say, independent, dead to all feelings of love; such, at last, as Porpora has unceasingly represented the ideal type of the priestess of the muses! He has prevailed, my terrible master; and I have arrived at the point he desired. I do not believe that I shall be the happier or the worthier for it. Since I have ceased to love, and have felt that I can never love again, I have become insensible to the fire of inspiration and the excitement of the stage. This icy climate and this court atmosphere mournfully depress me. The absence of Porpora, the species of abandonment in which I find myself, and the will of the king, which prolongs my engagement against my wishes—I may confess this to you, madame, may I not?"

"I ought to have guessed it! Poor child, you have been thought proud of the preference with which the king honours you, while, like me, like all his family, like his favourites, his soldiers, his pages, even his dogs, you are his prisoner and his slave. But tell me all that has passed since the death of Count Albert?"

"Certain extraordinary and inexplicable facts have

occurred in the midst of a monotonous and gloomy life. I will relate them to you in their simple truth; your highness will perhaps assist me to understand them."

"I will do my best, on condition that you call me Amelia, as you did just now. It is not yet midnight, and I will not be 'your highness' till day-break."

La Porporina renewed her recital in these words:—

"I related to Madame de Kleist, when she first did me the honour to visit me at my own house, that I was separated from Porpora as we arrived at Bohemia, on the Prussian frontier. To this day I know not whether the passport of my master was at fault, or whether the king had forestalled our arrival by issuing one of those orders, whose rapidity is prodigious, against Porpora's entrance into his States. This, it may be, culpable thought, was the first which occurred to me, for I remembered the rough and honest sincerity with which Porpora had defended the house of Trenck, and blamed the harshness of the king, when, at a supper at Count Hoditz's, in Moravia, the king himself, under the name of the Baron de Kreutz, had announced to us the pretended treason of Trenck and his confinement at Glatz."

"Indeed!" cried the princess; "was it in defence of Trenck that Maître Porpora displeased the king?"

"The king has never spoken of it to me, and I fear to bring it back to his memory. But it is certain that, in spite of my prayers and the promises of his majesty, Porpora has never been recalled."

"And never will be," returned Amelia; "for the king neither forgets nor forgives the frankness which wounds his self-love. This Solomon of the north hates and persecutes whosoever doubts the infallibility of his judgments; above all, when his decision is but a coarse pretence, an odious pretext to get rid of an enemy. Thus, go into mourning, my child, you will never again see Porpora at Berlin."

"In spite of the grief I feel for his absence, I no longer desire to see him here, madame, and I shall take no more steps to procure the king's pardon. I received this morning a letter from my master, announcing the reception of an opera of his at the Imperial Theatre of Vienna. After a thousand difficulties he has at last achieved his object, and the piece is to be put in preparation at once. Henceforth,

then, I shall think more of rejoining him than of tempting him hither; but I greatly fear that I am no more at liberty to leave, than I was at liberty to choose whether I would come."

"What do you mean?"

"At the frontier, when I saw that they were forcing my master to re-enter his carriage and turn back, I wished to accompany him and renounce my engagement at Berlin. I was so indignant at the brutality and apparent bad faith of such a reception, that I would have paid the forfeit by the utmost excess of labour, rather than proceed further into a country so despotically ruled. But at the first evidence I gave of my intentions, I was summoned by a police-officer to get into another post-chaise, which was brought and harnessed in a moment; and as I was surrounded by soldiers resolved to make me obey this summons, I embraced my master, weeping, and allowed myself to be conducted to Berlin, where I arrived at midnight, overpowered with fatigue and grief. I was set down close to the palace, not far from the Opera, in a pretty house belonging to the king, and so arranged that I should reside absolutely alone. I found servants ready to receive my orders, and a supper prepared. I have since learned that M. de Pœlnitz had received directions to arrange everything for my arrival. I was scarcely installed, when a message was brought me from Baron de Kreutz, demanding if I were visible. I hastened to receive him, impatient as I was to complain to him of the reception Porpora had met with, and to demand redress, I pretended not to know that Baron de Kreutz and Frederick II. were one. I might well be supposed ignorant of it. The deserter Karl, in confiding to me his project of assassinating him, as a superior Prussian officer, had not named him, and I had only learnt his rank from Count Hoditz, after the king had quitted Roswald. He entered with a smiling and affable air, which I had not seen in him during his incognito. Under his pseudonyme, and in a strange country, he was somewhat constrained. At Berlin, he seemed to me to have recovered all the majesty of his position, that is to say, the protecting kindness and generous consideration with which, upon occasion, he so well knows how to adorn his power. He came towards me, holding out his hands, and asking if I remembered to have seen him anywhere before!

"'Yes, monsieur le baron,' I replied, 'and I remember you offered and promised me your assistance at Berlin, if I should ever require it.' Then I related to him, with considerable vivacity, what had occurred at the frontier, and asked him if he would lay before the king my demand for reparation of the outrage offered to an illustrious master, and for the constraint exercised towards myself.

"'Reparation!' replied the king, smiling maliciously, 'is that all? Would M. Porpora enter the lists against the King of Prussia? Perhaps Mademoiselle Porporina requires that he should bend the knee before her?'

"This raillery increased my vexation. 'Your majesty may add irony to what I have already suffered,' I returned, 'but I would rather have cause to bless than to fear you.'

"The king shook my arm somewhat rudely. 'Ah, you are trying which of us can best dissemble,' said he, fixing his penetrating eyes upon mine; 'I thought you simple and ingenuous, and now I find you knew me perfectly at Roswald.'

"'No, sire,' I rejoined, 'I did not know you, and would to Heaven I never had known you!'

"'I cannot say as much,' he replied gently; 'for without you, I might perhaps be resting in some ditch in Roswald Park. Success in battles is no guarantee against the ball of an assassin, and I shall never forget that, if the destiny of Prussia is still in my hands, it is to a good little soul, an enemy of cowardly plotters, that I owe it. Thus, my dear Porporina, your ill-humour shall not render me ungrateful. Calm yourself, I beg, and tell me what you have to complain of, for up to this moment I understand but little about it.'

"Whether it was that the king pretended to know nothing of the matter, or that the police had indeed thought they had detected some defect in the form of my master's papers, he listened to my story with much attention, and then said, with the calm air of a judge who will not lightly pronounce judgment, 'I will examine this matter, and render you an account of it; I shall be greatly surprised if my people have sought a quarrel without motive, with a traveller whose passport was *en règle*. There must have been some misunderstanding. I will find it out, be assured of that, and if any one has overstepped his orders he shall be punished.'

"'Sire, this is not what I ask. I ask the recall of Porpora.'

"'And I promise it to you,' he replied; 'now take a less gloomy air and tell me how you discovered the secret of my incognito.'

"Upon this I chatted freely with the king, and found him so kind, so amiable, so fascinating in conversation, that I forgot all the prejudices I had entertained against him, in admiration of his mind, at once so judicious and brilliant, and the easy benevolence of manners which I had not found with Maria Theresa, in short, with the delicacy of his sentiments in regard to all matters on which he touched.

"'Listen,' he said, as he took his hat to leave me; 'I have a friendly piece of advice to give you in the first moment of your arrival here; it is to speak to no one, whosoever it may be, of the service you have rendered me, and of the visit I have paid you this evening. Though there is nothing but what is highly honourable to us both in my eagerness to thank you, it would give rise to a very false idea as to the relations of mind and friendship I desire to hold with you. They would think you eager for that, which in the language of courts, is called the favour of the master. You would be an object of distrust with some, of jealousy with others. The smallest inconvenience would be to draw upon you a crowd of solicitors who would make you the medium of their foolish requests; and as you would doubtless be too high-minded to play such a part, you would be the butt of their cajoleries or enmities.'

"'I promise your majesty,' I replied, 'to act as you have just commanded me.'

"'I command you in nothing, Consuelo,' he returned, 'but I rely upon your wisdom and uprightness. I have seen in you, from the first glance, a noble soul and a just mind, and it is because I desire to make you the pearl of my department of fine arts, that I sent an order from the depths of Silesia, to furnish you a carriage at my expense, to conduct you from the frontier immediately you should arrive there. It is not my fault if they turned it into a species of rolling prison, and separated you from your protector. In the mean time, and till he is restored to you, I will replace him if you find me worthy of the same confidence and attachment you entertained towards him.'

"I confess, my dear Amelia, that I was deeply touched by this paternal language, and this delicate friendship. Perhaps, also, somewhat of pride was mingled with the feelings; and the tears came to my eyes when the king held out his hand as he left me, I almost kissed it, as was, doubtless, my duty, but since I am making my confession, I ought to say, that; at the moment I was about to do so, I felt myself seized with terror, and as it where paralysed with the chill of distrust. I thought it possible that the king was cajoling me, and flattering my vanity, to deter me from relating the scene at Roswald, which might produce, in some minds, an impression adverse to his political views. It also seemed to me as if he dreaded ridicule for having shown me kindness and gratitude. And then, suddenly, in less than a second, I remembered the terrible military *régime* of Prussia, of which the Baron Trenck had given me a minute account; the ferocity of the recruiters, the misfortunes of Karl, the captivity of that noble Trenck, which I attributed to his having delivered the poor deserter; the cries of a soldier, whom I had seen flogged that morning as I passed through a village, and all that despotic system which forms the strength and glory of the great Frederick. I could no longer hate him personally; but already I saw in him the absolute master, the natural enemy of simple hearts, which cannot understand the necessity of inhuman laws, and which cannot penetrate the secrets of empires. Since that day I have never seen the king at my own house, but he has summoned me sometimes to Sans-Souci, where I have even passed several days together with my companions, Porporina and Conciolini; and here I have been commanded to play the harpsichord at his smaller concerts, and to accompany the violin of M. Graun, or of Benda; the flute of M. Quantz, or even that of the king himself."

"Which is much less agreeable than accompanying any of the former," said the Princess of Prussia; "for I know by experience, that my dear brother, when he makes false notes, or loses the time, lays the blame upon whoever is accompanying him, and seeks a quarrel with them."

"It is true," replied La Porporina; "and his talented master, M. Quantz himself, is not always exempt from this injustice. But his majesty, when he allows himself to be thus carried away, quickly repairs the wrong by acts of de-

ference and delicate praises, which shed balm over the wounds of self-love. It is thus, that by a kind word, by a simple exclamation of admiration, he succeeds in procuring pardon for his harshness and passion even from artists, who are the most susceptible people in the world."

"But you, after all you know of him, and with your modest uprightness of character, how can you allow yourself to be fascinated by this basilisk?"

"I confess to you, madame, that I have often experienced his ascendency without being aware of it. As I have ever been a stranger to these little tricks, I am continually their dupe, and it is only upon subsequent reflection that I can detect them. I have frequently seen the king at the theatre, and occasionally even in my dressing-room, when the representation was terminated. He has always shown a paternal interest for me, but with the exception of two or three times, in the gardens of Sans-Souci, I have never found myself alone with him, and I ought to own that this was the result of my ascertaining the usual hour of his walk, and placing myself purposely in his path. Upon these occasions he either called me to him or came courteously to meet me, and I seized the opportunity to speak to him of Porpora, and to renew my request. I always received the same promise, without finding it carried into execution. Recently I have changed my tactics, and have asked permission to return to Vienna; but the king listens to my prayer, sometimes with affectionate reproaches, sometimes with a freezing coldness, but more frequently with undisguised ill-humour. The last attempt has not, in fact, been more successful than the former; and when the king has replied drily, 'Go, mademoiselle, you are free;' I have obtained neither a settlement of accounts, passport, nor permission to travel. Matters have rested here, and I have no resource but in flight, if my position should become too difficult to be endured. Alas! madame, I was often wounded by Maria Theresa's want of taste for music; I never dreamed then that a musical king was much more to be dreaded than an unmusical empress.

"I have now told you the whole of my connection with his majesty. Never have I had occasion to fear, nor even suspect, the caprice which your highness would attribute to him. Only I have sometimes been proud to think that, thanks to my musical talent, and to the romantic circum-

stances under which I had the happiness of preserving his life, the king entertains towards me a species of friendship. He has often said so, with such grace, with so sincere and frank an air, and he has seemed to take so much good-humoured pleasure in conversing with me, that I have become accustomed, perhaps without knowing it, and certainly, in spite of myself, to love him also with a species of friendly affection. The expression is singular, and it may perhaps be misplaced in my mouth, but the feeling of affectionate respect, of timid confidence, with which the presence, the look, the voice, and the gentle words of this royal basilisk, as you call him, inspire me, is as strange as it is sincere. We are hear to speak the truth to each other, and it is agreed that I shall put no restraint upon myself; well, then, I declare that the king fills me with fear, almost with horror, when I do not see him, and yet breathe the rarified air of his empire; but when in his presence I am under the effect of his influence, and am ready to accord him every proof of devotion which a timid but pious daughter can give to a rigid yet good father."

"You make me tremble!" cried the princess; "good Heavens! if you should allow him to influence and fascinate you to such a degree as to betray our cause!"

"Oh, never, never, madame! Have no fear. Where my friend, or any others are concerned, I defy the king, or one more skilled, if such exist, to make me fall into a snare."

"I believe you. You exercise over me, with your frank air, the same fascination to which Frederick subjects you. Go on, and do not be vexed, I do not compare you to him. Continue your history, and tell me of Cagliostro. I hear that by means of magic, he has caused you to see a dead friend, whom I suppose to be the Count Albert."

"I am ready to satisfy you, noble Amelia; but if I resolve to tell you yet another painful adventure, which I would gladly be able to forget, I have the right to ask you certain questions, according to the agreement between us."

"And I will reply to them."

"Well, then, madame, do you believe that the dead can quit their tombs, or, at least, that a representation of their faces, apparently animated by life, can be evoked at the will of magicians, and take possession of our imaginations to such a degree as to be reproduced before our eyes, and disturb our reason?"

"The question is very complicated; and all I can answer is, that I believe in nothing which is impossible. I believe no more in the power of magic than I do in the re-appearance of the dead. As for our poor foolish imagination, I believe it capable of anything."

"Your highness—pardon me, Amelia—you do not believe in magic, and yet—but the question is, doubtless, indiscreet?"

"And yet you would say I am given to magic; that is well known. Now, my child, allow me to leave the explanation of this singular inconsistency till the proper time and place present themselves. After the scroll sent by the sorcerer Saint Germain, which was in reality a letter from Trenck to me, you may already divine that this pretended necromancy may serve as a pretext for many things. But to reveal to you all it conceals from the eyes of the vulgar, from the *espionnage* of courts and the tyranny of laws, would not be the affair of a moment. Be patient; I have resolved to initiate you into all my secrets. You deserve this confidence better than my well-beloved De Kleist, who is timid and superstitious. Yes, angel of goodness as you see her, this tender-hearted woman has not common sense. She believes in sorcerers, in ghosts, and warnings, as though she had not before her eyes, and in her hands, the mysterious thread of these magical proceedings. She is like those alchemists of past times, who, with exquisite patience and science, created monsters, and then forthwith, alarmed with the work of their own hands, become the slaves of some familiar demon, the offspring of their alembic."

"Perhaps I may not be more courageous than Madame de Kleist," replied La Porporina; "and I confess that I have before me a proof of the power, if not of the infallibility of Cagliostro. Imagine to yourself, that after having promised to show me the person of whom I was thinking, and whose name he pretended to read in my eyes, he showed me another; and still more, that in showing me this other, living, he appeared to be completely ignorant that he was, in fact, dead. But spite of this double error, he raised before my eyes the husband whom I had lost; a circumstance which will for ever remain to me a sad and terrible enigma."

"He showed you some phantom, and your imagination did the rest."

"My imagination had nothing to do with it, I can assure

you. I expected to see in a glass, or behind a gauze, some portrait of my master, Porpora; for I had spoken of him several times during supper, and while deploring his absence, I had observed that M. Cagliostro paid great attention to my words. To render his task easier, I chose in my thought the person of Porpora for the subject of the apparition, and I awaited it with great calmness, not even then taking the trial as a serious matter. In short, if there be but one moment in my life in which I was not thinking of M. de Rudolstadt, it was that very moment when M. Cagliostro asked me, as we entered his magical laboratory, if I would consent to allow my eyes to be bandaged, and to follow him, holding his hand. As I knew him to be a man of good breeding, I did not hesitate to accept his arm, only annexing the condition that he should not leave me for a moment. 'I was just about to beg of you,' said he, 'not to move one step from my side, nor to let go of my hand, whatever may happen, whatever emotion you may experience.' I promised to obey, but a simple affirmation did not satisfy him. He obliged me to swear solemnly that I would not make a single movement, a single exclamation, in short, that I would remain dumb and motionless during the time the apparition lasted. Then he put on his glove, and having covered my head with a hood of black velvet, which reached my shoulders, he walked on, leading me for about five minutes, without my hearing any door open or shut. The hood prevented my feeling any change in the atmosphere; thus I could not tell whether we had left the cabinet or not, such turnings and windings did he make me take, as though to prevent my knowing the direction we followed. At last he stopped, and with one hand raised the hood so lightly that I did not feel him. My breathing becoming more free, alone showed me that I was at liberty to look about, but I found myself in such thick darkness that this liberty was of no avail. By degrees, however, I saw before me a bright star, at first vacillating and feeble, but quickly clear and brilliant. It had seemed to me at first very distant, but when it was fully lighted it appeared quite close. This was the effect, I think, of a more or less intense light behind a transparency. Cagliostro made me approach the star which was pierced in the wall, and I saw on the other side of this wall a chamber singularly decorated, and filled with wax candles arranged in systematic order.

There was in the ornaments and entire arrangement of this apartment every characteristic of a place destined for magical operations. But I had no leisure for minute examinations; my attention was absorbed by a person seated before a table. He was alone, and his face was hidden in his hands, as though he were plunged in profound meditation. I could not, therefore, perceive his features, while his figure was disguised by a costume such as I had never seen anyone wear before. As far as I could observe, it was a robe, or a mantle of white satin lined with purple, and fastened upon the breast by hieroglyphic jewels set in gold, where I could distinguish a rose, a cross, a triangle, a death's head, and several rich cords of various colours. All I could understand was, that that was not Porpora. But at the end of two or three minutes, this mysterious personage, whom I began to take for a statue, slowly removed his hands, and I saw distinctly the face of Count Albert; not as I had seen it last, covered with the shadows of death; but though pale, animated, and full of soul in its serenity; such, in short, as I had seen it in his happiest hours of calm and confidence. I was on the point of uttering a cry, and breaking, with an involuntary movement, the glass which separated me from him; but a violent pressure of the hand from Cagliostro recalled my oath, and filled me with vague terror. Moreover, at the same moment, a door opened at the end of the apartment in which I saw Albert, and several unknown persons, dressed something like him, entered sword in hand. After having made several singular gestures, as though they were playing a pantomime, they addressed him each in his turn, and in a solemn tone, with some incomprehensible words. He rose, walked towards them, and replied to them in words equally obscure, and which conveyed no meaning to my mind, though I understand German as well now as my native tongue. This dialogue resembled those we have in dreams, and the singularity of this scene, the marvellousness of this apparition, partook also of the nature of a dream to such a degree, that I tried to move that I might assure myself I was not sleeping. But Cagliostro forced me to remain still, and I recognised the voice of Albert so perfectly that it was impossible for me any longer to doubt the reality of what I saw. At last, carried away by the desire of speaking to him, I was about to forget my oath, when the

black hood once more fell over my head. I tore it violently off, but the crystal star had disappeared, and all was plunged again in darkness.

"'If you make the least movement,' murmured Cagliostro, in a trembling voice, 'neither you nor I will ever see light again.'

"I had strength to follow him, and to walk for some time, zigzag, in an unknown space. At length, when he finally removed the hood, I found myself in his laboratory, feebly lighted, as it had been at the commencement of this adventure. Cagliostro was very pale, and still trembled; for I had felt, whilst walking with him, that his arm shook with convulsive agitation, and that he made me advance very rapidly, as though he were the prey to some great terror. The first words he uttered were bitter reproaches upon my want of faith, and upon the frightful dangers to which I had exposed him by seeking to violate my promise. 'I ought to have remembered,' he added, in a harsh and irritated tone, 'that a woman's word of honour is not binding, and that a man should take care how he yields to her vain and fool-hardy curiosity.'

"Until then I had not dreamed of sharing in the terror of my guide. I had been so struck with the idea of finding Albert living, that I had not asked myself if this was humanly possible. I had even forgotten that death had for ever deprived me of this dear and precious friend. The magician's emotion at last reminded me that all this partook of the supernatural, that I had just seen a spectre. Still my reason rejected the impossible idea, and the bitterness of Cagliostro's reproaches produced in me a nervous irritation, which saved me from weakness.

"'You pretend to believe in your own falsehoods,' I said, energetically; 'but you play a cruel game; yes, you play with the most sacred things, with death itself.'

"'Soul devoid of faith and courage!' he replied, angrily, but with an imposing expression, 'you believe in death like the vulgar, and yet you have had a great master, a master who has said to you a hundred times over: 'We do not die, nothing dies, there is no such thing as death.' You accuse me of falsehood, and you appear to be unaware that the only falsehood here, is the name even of death in your impious mouth.'

"I confess that this strange reply momentarily confounded my reason, and vanquished for an instant the resistance of my troubled mind. How could this man be so perfectly acquainted with my relations with Albert, even to the secret of his doctrine? Did he share his faith, or did he make it a pretext to acquire ascendancy over my imagination? I remained confused and overpowered. But I soon recollected that this gross manner of interpreting the belief of Albert could not be in accordance with mine, and that it rested with God, and not with the impostor, Cagliostro, to evoke the dead or restore life. Convinced, at last, that I was the dupe of an inexplicable illusion, but the clue to which I might, perhaps, some day find, I rose, coldly praising the sorcerer for his skill, and asking, with somewhat of irony, for an explanation of the singular discourse these shadows had held between them. Upon this, he replied that it was impossible to satisfy me, and that I ought to be content with having seen this person calm and usefully engaged. 'You will ask me in vain,' he added, 'what were his thoughts and actions in life. I am even ignorant of his name. When you thought of him, requesting, at the same time, to see him, a mysterious communication was formed between you and him, which my power has sufficed to render efficacious so far as to present him before you; but there it ended.'

"'Your power,' I said, 'does not go even so far; for it was Maître Porpora of whom I was thinking, and it was not Maître Porpora whom your power evoked.'

"'I know nothing about that,' he replied, with a terrifying gravity, 'and I will hear no more. I saw nothing either in your thoughts, or in the magic picture. My reason could not support such sights, and I have need of all my self-possession for the exercise of my power. But the laws of science are infallible, and it cannot be but that you were, though perhaps unconsciously to yourself, thinking of another than Porpora, since it is not he whom you saw.'"

"This is always the way with these madmen," said the princess, shrugging her shoulders. "Each has his peculiar manner of proceeding; but they all, by means of a certain captious reasoning, which might well be called the logic of insanity, manage never to fall short of what they profess, and by fine words bewilder the ideas of others."

"Mine were bewildered indeed," returned Consuelo, "and I no longer possessed the faculty of analysing. This apparition of Albert, true or false, powerfully increased the grief of having lost him for ever, and I burst into tears.

"'Consuelo!' the magician said to me, in a solemn tone, offering me his hand to quit the apartment (and you may well believe that my true name, unknown to every one here, was a fresh surprise from his lips), 'you have serious faults to atone for, and I hope you will neglect nothing to regain your peace of conscience.'

"I had no power to reply. I tried, in vain, to hide my tears from my companions, who were impatiently awaiting my return in a neighbouring room. I was still more impatient to retire; and as soon as I was alone, after having given free vent to my grief, I passed the night, lost in reflections and remarks upon the scene of this painful evening. The more I sought to comprehend it, the more I became lost in a labyrinth of uncertainties. Above all, since the adventure of Cagliostro, a dark melancholy has seized upon my soul. No night passes in which I do not dream of Albert, in which I do not see him irritated against me, or indifferent and pre-occupied; speaking an incomprehensible language, and given up to meditations foreign to our love, as he was when I saw him in the magical glass. I awake bathed in perspiration, and I weep as I think that, in the new existence upon which death has caused him to enter, his sorrowful and bewildered soul suffers, perhaps, from my disdain and ingratitude. In short, I have killed him, that is certain, and no human power, had it entered into a compact with heaven and hell, could re-unite me to him. I can, therefore, make no atonement in this life, where I am useless and solitary, and I have no desire save that it may be quickly brought to an end."

CHAPTER VIII.

"HAVE you contracted no new friendships here, then?" said the Princess Amelia. "Among so many clever and talented men, whom my brother boasts that he has drawn

hither from all corners of the world, are there none worthy of esteem? Prince Henri, my brother, is he not an amiable cavalier?"

"Yes, certainly."

"A great lover of the beautiful, possessed of an artist's soul, a hero in war, with a face striking and pleasing, without being handsome; a proud and independent mind, the enemy of despotism, the unsubmissive and threatening slave of my brother the tyrant; in short, the best of the family, beyond doubt. They say that he is greatly smitten with you. Has he not told you so?"

"I listened to it as to a pleasantry."

"And you do not care to believe it serious?"

"No, madame."

"You are very difficult to please, my dear. What fault have you to find with him?"

"A great fault; or, at least, an invincible obstacle to my love for him: he is a prince."

"Thank you for the compliment, wicked one. Then he had nothing to do with your fainting fit at the theatre a few days ago? It is said that the king, jealous of the way in which he looked at you, put him under arrest at the commencement of the spectacle, and that it was grief for this which made you ill."

"I was absolutely ignorant that the prince had been put under arrest, and I was very sure I was not the cause. My mischance arose from a very different reason. Imagine, madame, that in the midst of the piece I was singing, somewhat mechanically, as is too often the case here, my eyes wandered by chance towards the boxes in the first row, close upon the stage, when suddenly at the back of that belonging to M. Golowkin, I saw a pale face leaning forwards as though to look at me. This face was Albert's, madame. I swear it before God; I saw him, I recognised him; I know not if it were an illusion, but it is impossible for any to be more terrible and complete."

"Poor child! you are subject to visions, that is certain."

"That is not all. Last week, after I had delivered M. de Trenck's letter to you, as I was retiring, I lost my way in the palace, and met at the entrance to the museum M. Stoss, with whom I stopped to speak. Well, I once more saw there this same face of Albert, and I saw it threatening in expres-

sion, as I had seen it the evening before at the theatre, indifferent; as I see it unceasingly in my dreams, irritated and disdainful."

"And M. Stoss, did he see it also?"

"He saw it distinctly, and told me that it was a certain Trismegistus, whom your highness takes pleasure in consulting as a necromancer."

"Ah, good heaven!" cried Madame de Kleist, turning pale, "I was sure he was a true sorcerer! I can never look at that man without terror. Though his features are handsome and his air noble, there is something diabolical in his physiognomy, and I am sure that he takes, like a Proteus, any appearance he pleases, to frighten people. Added to this he is a grumbler and a satirist like all of his class. I remember that once, as he was drawing my horoscope, he undisguisedly reproached me for having separated from M. de Kleist, because M. de Kleist was ruined. He charged me with it as a great crime. I wished to defend myself; as he was somewhat haughty with me, I begau to grow angry, when he vehemently predicted that I should marry again, but that through my fault my second husband would perish still more miserably than the first, and that I should be well punished by my remorse and by the public reprobation. As he said this, his face grew so terrible, that I thought I saw that of M. de Kleist restored to life, and I fled into the apartment of her royal highness, uttering loud cries."

"Yes, it was a droll scene," said the princess, who returned occasionally, as though in spite of herself, to her dry and bitter tone, "and I laughed at it like a mad woman."

"I do not see the reason," said Consuelo, artlessly; "but after all, who is this Trismegistus? and since your highness does not believe in sorcerers—"

"I have promised to tell you some day what sorcery is. Do not be in such haste to learn. For the present, know that the conjuror Trismegistus is a man whom I greatly esteem, and who may be very useful to all there of us, and to many others."

"I wish I could see him again," said Consuelo; "for though I tremble at the thought, I would fain assure myself whether he really resembles M. de Rudolstadt so much as I imagine."

"Whether he resembles M. de Rudolstadt, do you say?

You remind me of a circumstance that I had almost forgotten, and which will perhaps give a very simple explanation to this grand mystery. Stay, let me think a few moments. Yes, I have it. Listen, my poor child, and learn to distrust everything which has a supernatural appearance. It was Trismegistus whom Cagliostro showed you, for Trismegistus is connected with Cagliostro, and was here last year at the same time as himself. It was Trismegistus whom you saw at the theatre in Count Golowkin's box, for Trismegistus lives in his house, and they are occupied together in chemistry or alchemy. Finally, it was Trismegistus whom you saw in the palace on the following day, for on that very day, and a short time after I had dismissed you, I also saw Trismegistus, and by the way, he gave me a full account of the escape of Trenck."

"Boasting that he had contributed towards it," said Madame de Kleist, "and making your highness reimburse him for sums which it is very certain were not disbursed in that cause. Your highness may think what you please, but I will presume to tell you, that this man is a *chevalier d'industrie*."

"Which does not prevent him from being a great sorcerer, does it, De Kleist? How can you reconcile so much respect for his science with contempt for his person?"

"Why, madame, there is nothing more natural than that they should go together. We fear sorcerers though we detest them, just as we do the devil."

"And still we desire to see the devil and cannot dispense with sorcerers. Is this your logic, my pretty De Kleist?"

"But, madame," said Consuelo, who eagerly listened to this strange discussion, "how do you know that this man resembles the Count de Rudolstadt?"

"I forgot to tell you, and yet it was a simple chance which made me know it. This morning, when Supperville was relating to me your history and that of Count Albert, all he said concerning this strange person made me curious to know if he were handsome, and whether his physiognomy agreed with this extraordinary imagination. Supperville thought for some moments, and then replied—

"'Stay, madame, I can easily give you a just idea of him, for among your playthings is one who would bear a startling resemblance to this poor Rudolstadt, if he were thinner, paler,

and wore his hair differently. It is your sorcerer Trismegistus.' And this is the secret of the affair, my charming widow; and this secret has no more to do with sorcery than have Cagliostro, Trismegistus, Saint Germain, and Company."

"You remove a weight from my mind," said La Porporina. "I feel as though I were returning to life, as though I were waking from a painful slumber! Thanks be to you for this explanation! I am not mad then, I am not subject to visions, I shall no longer be afraid of myself! Yet, see what the human heart is," she added, after a moment's thought; "I believe I regret the being freed from my terror and weakness. In my extravagance I had almost persuaded myself that Albert was not dead, and that some day, when he should have made me expiate by these terrible apparitions the wrongs I have done him, he would return to me in peace and happiness. Now I feel sure that Albert sleeps in the tomb of his ancestors; that he will never leave it; that death will not give up its prey."

"And could you doubt this? Well, there is happiness in madness; as for me, I did not hope that Trenck would leave the prisons of Silesia, and yet it was possible, and has come to pass!"

"If I were to tell you, my beautiful Amelia, all the suppositions to which my poor mind gave itself up, you would see that, spite of their improbability, they were not altogether impossible. For example, a lethargy—Albert was subject to them. But I will not recall these mad conjectures; they pain me too much now that I find the face I took for Albert's is that of a *chevalier d'industrie*."

"Trismegistus is not what they think him. But this is certain, that he is not the Count de Rudolstadt, for I have known him several years, and during that time, at least to all appearance, he has carried on the trade of a conjurer. Besides, he is not so like the Count de Rudolstadt as you persuade yourself he is. Supperville, who is too skilful a physician to bury a man in a lethargy, and who does not believe in ghosts, has observed differences which your emotion did not allow you to remark."

"Oh, would that I could see this Trismegistus again!" said Consuelo, with a pre-occupied air.

"In all probability you will not see him again very soon," said the princess, coldly. "He departed for Warsaw on the

day that you saw him in this palace. He never remains more than a couple of days at Berlin. But he is sure to return in a year."

"And if it should be Albert!" replied Consuelo, absorbed in a profound reverie.

The princess shrugged her shoulders.

"Decidedly," said she, "fate condemns me to have none but fools and mad women for my friends. One takes my sorcerer for her deceased husband, the Canon de Kleist, the other for her deceased husband, the Count de Rudolstadt; it is fortunate for me that I have a strong head, or I should, perhaps, take him for Trenck. Come, Porporina, do not look at me with such a scared and bewildered air. Collect your senses. How can you suppose that if the Count Albert, instead of being dead, had awakened from a lethargy, so interesting an adventure would not have been noised through the world? Moreover, have you retained no connection with his family, and would they not have informed you of such a circumstance?"

"I have kept up no acquaintance with them," replied Consuelo. "The Canoness Wenceslawa wrote to me twice in the one year to announce two sad events, the death of her elder brother Christian, the father of my husband, who terminated his long and sad career without regaining the recollection of his son's decease, and the death of Baron Frederick, brother to Christian and the canoness, who was killed at the chase, by rolling from the fatal mountain of Schreckenstein to the bottom of the ravine. I replied to the canoness, as it was my duty to do. I did not presume to offer her my sad consolation. Her heart appeared to me, by her letters, to be divided between pride and natural kindliness. She called me her dear child, her generous friend, but she did not appear to desire the support or the attentions of my affection."

"Thus you suppose that Albert, restored to life, lives tranquilly and unknown at the Château des Géants, without making you acquainted with the fact, and without its being known beyond the precincts of the said château?"

"No, madame, I do not suppose it, for it would be quite impossible; and I am mad to wish still to doubt it," replied Consuelo, concealing her face, bathed with tears, between her hands.

As the night advanced the princess seemed to return to her most disagreeable self; the light and sarcastic tone with which she spoke of things so dear to the heart of Consuelo grievously afflicted her.

"There, do not be so miserable!" said Amelia, roughly. "A pretty party of pleasure we are making of this! De Kleist has never ceased trembling, and is as white as a ghost. I believe she will die of terror; and I, who wished to be happy and gay, I suffer in your suffering, my poor friend!"

The tone in which the princess pronounced these last words was in the good-natured diapason of her voice, and Consuelo, raising her head, saw a tear of sympathy stealing down her cheek, while her lips were still contracted by an ironical smile. She kissed the hand the abbess held out, and inwardly pitied her for not being able to be gentle and natural for four hours consecutively.

"However mysterious your Château des Géants may be," added the princess, "however savage the pride of the canoness, and however discreet the servants, be sure that nothing could take place there without entailing a certain publicity. It was in vain they tried to conceal the singularities of Albert; all the province quickly knew them, and your husband had long been a subject of conversation at the little court of Bareith, when Supperville was summoned to attend him. Now there is another mystery in this family, which doubtless they endeavour to conceal with equal care, but which is none the less open to the observation of the public. This is the flight of the young Baroness Amelia, who allowed herself to be carried off by some handsome adventurer shortly after the death of her cousin."

"And I, madame, was ignorant of it for some time. I can tell you that all things are not discovered in this world; for up to the present time they have not been able to learn the name and position of the man with whom the young baroness eloped, any more than they have learned the place of his retreat."

"Supperville told me as much. This old Bohemia is a country of mysterious adventure; but that is no reason why the Count Albert should be——."

"In the name of Heaven! madame, let us speak no more of this. I ask pardon for having wearied you with this

long history, and when your highness shall order me to retire——"

"Two o'clock in the morning!" cried Madame de Kleist, trembling at the lugubrious sound of the palace clock.

"In that case we must separate, my dear friends," said the princess; "for my sister D'Anspach is coming at seven to waken me for the purpose of listening to the whims of her dear margrave, who has recently returned from Paris, madly enamoured of Mademoiselle Clairon. My beautiful Porporina, it is you queens of the theatre who are, in fact, the queens of the world, as we are by right; and your lot is the best. There is no crowned head you cannot win from us if it so please you, and I should not be surprised to see Mademoiselle Hippolyte Clairon, who is a clever woman, become Margravine of Anspach some day, in competition with my sister, who is a fool. Now, give me my pelisse, De Kleist, I will conduct you to the end of the gallery."

"And your highness will return alone?" said Madame de Kleist, who appeared greatly disturbed.

"Quite alone," returned Amelia, "and fearless of the hobgoblins who, as I am assured, have held high court in the palace for some nights past. Come, come, Consuelo! let us see Madame de Kleist's terror as she crosses the gallery."

The princess took a torch and walked first, dragging Madame de Kleist after her, who was still in great alarm. Consuelo followed them, also somewhat terrified, without knowing why.

"I assure you, madame," said De Kleist, "that it is just the evil hour, and that there is rashness in crossing this part of the palace now. Why will you not let us wait half-an-hour longer? At half-past two there is nothing to fear."

"No, no," replied Amelia; "I should not be sorry to meet this spectre, and to see what it is like."

"What does it all mean?" asked Consuelo, hastening her steps, and addressing herself to Madame de Kleist.

"Do you not know?" said the princess. "The white woman who sweeps the staircases and corridors of the palace, when some member of the royal family is about to die, has revisited us during the last few nights. It appears that she has chosen this spot for her diversions, therefore it is my

existence that is threatened. This is the reason you see me so tranquil. My sister-in-law, the Queen of Prussia (who has the weakest head that ever wore a crown!) cannot rest here, I am told, and goes every night to sleep at Charlottenberg; but as she has an infinite respect for the sweeper, in which the queen, my mother, who is not more reasonable than herself on this head, participates, these ladies have forbidden the phantom to be watched, and have desired that she may not be by any means disturbed in her noble operations. Thus the palace is swept with a vengeance, and by the hand of Lucifer himself, which does not prevent it from being very dirty, as you see."

At this moment a large cat rushed from the shadowy depths of the gallery, and swearing and spitting, brushed passed Madame de Kleist, who uttered a piercing cry, and made towards the apartments of the princess; but the abbess forcibly withheld her, filling the echoing space around with bursts of bitter mocking laughter, even more chilling than the east wind whistling in the depths of that vast palace. The cold made Consuelo shiver, or it may be that fear had something to do with it; for the anxious fear of Madame de Kleist seemed to attest a real danger, and the forced and reckless gaiety of the princess did not proclaim a sincere feeling of security.

"I wonder at the incredulity of your royal highness," said Madame de Kleist, in a broken voice, and with some vexation. "If, like me, you had seen and heard this white woman on the evening preceding the death of the king, your august father ——"

"Alas!" replied Amelia, in a diabolical tone, "as I am quite sure she does not come now to announce that of the king, my august brother, I am quite ready that she should come for me. His fiendship knows that for my happiness one or other of these deaths must take place."

"Ah, madame! do not speak thus, and at such a time," ejaculated Madame de Kleist, with teeth so clenched that she could scarcely pronounce her words; "hold, in the name of Heaven! and listen: is not that enough to make one tremble?"

The princess stopped with a mocking air, and the rustling of her silk dress, stiff and thick as paste-board, ceasing to drown more distant noises, our three heroines, almost arrived

at the gallery, distinctly heard the harsh sound of a broom as it passed in unequal strokes over the stone stairs, and seemed to be drawing near, step by step, like a servant hastening to finish his work.

The princess hesitated a moment, then said with a resolute air, "As there is nothing supernatural in that, I will know if it be a lacquey walking in his sleep, or a page playing the part of a spy. Lower your veil, Porporina, you must not be seen in my society. As for you, De Kleist, you may faint if that will be any amusement to you; but I warn you I shall not concern myself about you. Come, brave De Rudolstadt, you who have confronted worse adventures, follow me if you love me!"

Amelia walked with a firm step towards the head of the staircase; Consuelo followed her, though she was not allowed to hold the torch; and Madame de Kleist, as terrified to remain alone as she was to advance, dragged her trembling limbs along behind them, clinging to the mantle of La Porporina.

The infernal broom was no longer to be heard, and the princess, arrived at the balustrade, raised her torch that she might the better see into the distance. But whether in reality she was less calm than she desired to appear, or that she perceived some terrible object, her hand failed her, and the candlestick, with its ornament of carved crystal, fell to the bottom of the spiral staircase with a terrible crash. At this juncture Madame de Kleist, completely losing her presence of mind, and forgetful alike of the princess and the actress, took instant flight, nor halted till she found herself in the dark before the door of her mistress's apartment, where she sought refuge, while the princess, divided between an insurmountable emotion, and the shame of owning herself conquered, retraced her steps with Consuelo, at first slowly, but by degrees quickening her pace, for other steps made themselves heard behind her own, which were not those of Porporina, who was walking in a line with the princess, more resolutely, perhaps, though she had made no boast of her courage. These strange steps, which drew nearer to them every moment, sounded in the gloom like those of an old woman in slippers, and clattered against the flag stones, while the broom still continued its office, sweeping against the walls, now on the right, now on the left. This short

passage appeared very long to Consuelo. If any thing can conquer the courage of a firm and courageous mind, it is a danger which can neither be foreseen nor overcome. She did not pique herself on a useless audacity, and therefore refrained from turning her head. The princess subsequently pretended that she had done so, though to no purpose, owing to the darkness; for the same reason, no one could deny or prove the fact. Consuelo only remembered that she had not relaxed her pace, neither had she addressed a single word to her during this forced retreat, and that upon entering her apartment somewhat precipitately, she had almost closed the door in her face, in such haste was she to shut it. However, Amelia would not confess her weakness, and quickly regained her *sang froid*, rallied Madame de Kleist, who was almost in convulsions, and reproached her bitterly for her cowardice and want of respect. The compassionate gentleness of Consuelo, who was grieved at the violent emotion of the favourite, aroused some pity in the princess's heart. She deigned to perceive that Madame de Kleist was incapable of hearing her, and that she lay swooning on a sofa, her face buried in the cushions. The clock struck three before this poor lady had perfectly recovered her senses, her terror still manifesting itself in tears. Amelia was tired of being no longer a princess, and the desire to undress alone and wait upon herself had passed away; moreover, her mind was, perhaps, struck by some evil presentiment. At all events she resolved to keep Madame de Kleist by her side till daybreak.

"By that time we shall find some good pretext to give a colour to the affair, if it should reach my brother's ears. As for you, Porporina, your presence here will be much more difficult to explain, and upon no consideration would I have you be seen to issue from my apartments. You must retire alone, then, and that at once, for they are early risers in this abominable palace. Come, De Kleist, calm yourself; I will take care of you, and if you can collect your senses, tell us how you came here, and where you have left your chasseur, that Porporina may avail herself of his protection to regain her home."

Terror renders us so profoundly selfish that Madame de Kleist, enchanted at not having to confront the horrors of the gallery, and caring but little for the agony Consuelo

might experience in crossing it alone, recovered her senses sufficiently to explain the road she must take, and the signal she must give to her trusty servant, stationed at the entrance to the palace, in a sheltered and deserted spot, where she had desired him to await her return.

Furnished with these instructions, and quite sure of not again losing her way in the palace, Consuelo took leave of the princess, who had no longer any desire to accompany her through the gallery. The young girl departed alone, groping her way in the dark, and regained the awful staircase unmolested. A lighted lamp, suspended below, aided her in descending, which she accomplished without any evil *rencontre*, and even free of alarm. This time her determination of mind had come to her assistance; she felt that she was fulfilling a duty towards the unfortunate Amelia, and in such a case she was ever courageous and strong. At last she found the little mysterious door, of which Madame de Kleist had given her the key, and which opened upon the corner of a retired court-yard. Passing through, she walked along the outer wall in search of the chasseur. As soon as she had uttered the sign agreed upon, a shadow, detaching itself from the wall, came straight towards her, and a man, wrapped in a large cloak, bowed, and offered his arm in silence with every appearance of respect.

CHAPTER IX.

Consuelo remembered that Madame de Kleist, the better to conceal her frequent secret visits to the Princess Amelia, often went on foot to the palace of an evening, her head muffled in a thick black veil, her figure enveloped in a dark-coloured mantle, and leaning upon the arm of her servant. By these means she escaped the observation of the people about the palace, and might pass for one of those persons in distress who disguise themselves when they beg, and who thus receive assistance from the liberality of princes. But spite of these precautions on the part of the confidante and her mistress, their secret had a strong resemblance to the secret in a comedy; and if the king failed to take exception to

these doings, it was because he numbered them among those smaller irregularities which it is wiser to tolerate than divulge by resisting. He knew quite well that these two ladies were more concerned with Trenck than with magic, and though he almost equally condemned both these subjects of conversation, he shut his eyes, and felt inwardly indebted to his sister for affecting a mystery which effectually prevented him from incurring censure in the eyes of certain persons. He was quite willing to pretend to be deceived, that he might not appear to countenance the love and follies of his sister. It was upon the unfortunate Trenck that the weight of his severity fell, and thus he had accused him of imaginary crimes, that the public might not guess the real motives of his disgrace.

La Porporina, thinking that Madame de Kleist's servant had been instructed to assist in the incognito by giving her his arm as he would have given it to his mistress, did not hesitate to accept his services, and leaned upon him as she walked along the frozen and slippery pavement. But she had not advanced many steps before the man said to her with an easy assurance—

"Well, my beautiful countess, in what humour did you leave your fantastical Amelia?"

Spite of the cold and the east wind, Consuelo felt the blood mount to her cheeks. To all appearance, the valet took her for his mistress, thus betraying a revolting intimacy between them. La Porporina, seized with disgust, withdrew her hand from the man's arm, saying, dryly—

"You are mistaken."

"I am not generally mistaken," said the man in the cloak, with the same assurance. "The public may, perhaps, be ignorant that the divine Porporina is the Countess de Rudolstadt, but the Count de Saint Germain is better informed."

"Who are you?" said Consuelo, bewildered and surprised. "Do you not belong to the household of Madame de Kleist?"

"I belong but to myself, and am only the servant of truth," rejoined the stranger. "I have just told you my name, but I see it is unknown to Madame de Rudolstadt."

"Are you, then, the Count de Saint Germain in person?"

"Who else could call you by a name of which the public

is ignorant? Stay, madame la comtesse, this is the second time you have nearly fallen for want of my assistance. Deign to take my arm once more. I know the road to your house well, and I look upon it as a duty and an honour to conduct you thither in safety."

"I am obliged by your goodness, monsieur le comte," replied Consuelo, whose curiosity was too much excited to refuse the offer of this singular and interesting person. "Will you add to it by telling me why you call me thus?"

"Because I desire to obtain your confidence by showing you that I am worthy of it. I have long known of your marriage with Albert, and I have preserved it an inviolable secret, as I will continue to do, so long as you desire it."

"I see that my wishes on this matter are little respected by M. Supperville," said Consuelo, who immediately laid to his charge M. Saint Germain's knowledge of her position.

"Do not accuse poor Supperville," returned the count. "He has disclosed nothing; unless, indeed, to the Princess Amelia, as a means of securing her favour. It is not from him that I learned the facts."

"And from whom, then, did you learn them, monsieur?"

"From the Count Albert de Rudolstadt himself. I know you are going to tell me that he died while they were performing the ceremony of your marriage; but I tell you there is no such thing as death, that no one, that nothing dies, and that it is possible to hold communion with those whom the vulgar call dead, when one knows their language and the secrets of their life."

"Since you know so much, monsieur, perhaps you are not ignorant that such assertions cannot easily convince me, while they greatly afflict me, by unceasingly persecuting me with the thought of a misfortune which I know to be without remedy, in spite of the lying promises of magic."

"You are right to be on your guard against magicians and impostors. I know that Cagliostro terrified you with an apparition which may be termed at least ill-timed. He yielded to the vain glory of showing you his power, without troubling himself concerning the disposition of your soul and the sublimity of his mission. Cagliostro is, nevertheless, no impostor; very far from it. But he is a vain man, and thus it is that he has often merited the reproach of charlatanism."

"Monsieur le comte, you are reproached with the same thing; and though it is admitted that you are a superior man, I feel bold enough to tell you frankly the causes which diminish my esteem for you."

"Such frankness becomes the nobleness of Consuelo," replied M. de Saint Germain, calmly, "and I am indebted to you for this appeal to my good faith. I will prove myself worthy of it, and will speak to you without reserve. But here we are at your door, and the cold, as well as the advanced hour, forbids me to detain you longer. If you would learn things of the utmost importance, and upon which your future welfare depends, permit me to converse with you secure from interruption."

"If your lordship will come and see me in the course of the day, I will await you in my apartments at whatever hour you shall appoint."

"I must speak to you to-morrow, and to-morrow you will receive a visit from Frederick, whom I cannot meet, because I have neither regard nor respect for him."

"Of what Frederick are you speaking, monsieur le comte?"

"Oh! not of our friend Frederick de Trenck, whom we have succeeded in releasing from his hands, but of that worthless and contemptible King of Prussia, who is paying court to you. Let us consider: to-morrow there will be a grand *bal masqué* at the opera; be there. Whatever disguise you may assume, I shall recognise you, and will make myself known to you. In such a crowd we shall find solitude and security. Otherwise, my intercourse with you would bring misfortunes on more sacred heads than one. To-morrow, then, madame la comtesse!"

Speaking thus, the Count de Saint Germain bowed profoundly to Consuelo, and disappeared, leaving her at the threshold of her abode petrified with surprise.

"In this kingdom of reason there is decidedly a constant conspiracy against reason," said the singer to herself, as she was falling asleep. "Scarcely do I escape from one peril, which threatens ruin, than another presents itself. The Princess Amelia has explained all my late enigmas, and I thought myself at peace; but at the same moment we met, or, at least, we heard the fantastic sweeper, walking about this palace of doubt, this fortress of incredulity, as tranquilly

as it would have done two hundred years ago. I am no sooner freed from the terror that Cagliostro had caused me, than up springs another magician still better instructed in my affairs. That these conjurors should keep account of all that concerns the lives of kings, and powerful or illustrious persons, I can well conceive; but that I, a poor, humble, and quietly-conducted girl, can conceal no fact of my life from their investigations, confounds and disturbs me in spite of myself. Courage! let me follow the advice of the princess, let me rely on the future for the explanation of this fresh prodigy, and, in the meantime, abstain from judging it. Perhaps the most extraordinary thing of us all is, that the king's visit, predicted by M. de Saint Germain, is, indeed, to take place to-morrow. This will be the third time only that the king has sought me in my own house. Can this M. de Saint Germain be in his confidence? They say we should distrust above all others those who speak ill of their masters; I will try not to forget this caution."

On the morrow, at one o'clock precisely, a carriage without livery or arms entered the court-yard of the house which the singer inhabited, and the king, who had sent to apprise her of his visit two hours before, that he might find her alone and in waiting, entered her apartments with his hat on his left ear, a smile upon his lips, and a small basket in his hands.

"Captain Kreutz brings you some fruit from his garden," said he. "Certain ill-intentioned people pretend that they come from the gardens of Sans-Souci, and that they were destined for the king's table. But the king does not trouble himself about us, thank Heaven! and the humble baron comes to pass an hour or two with his little friend."

This agreeable opening, instead of placing Consuelo at her ease, strangely disturbed her. Since she had been plotting against his wishes by receiving the confidences of the Princess Amelia, she had found it impossible to brave the royal inquisitor with her usual imperturbable frankness. Henceforth she must manage him, perhaps flatter him, and turn aside his suspicions by adroit coquetries.

Consuelo felt that this part did not suit her, that she should play it ill, especially if it were true that Frederick was *smitten* with her, as was whispered at court, where they would have thought it debasing to royalty to use the word

love with reference to an actress. Restless and anxious, Consuelo awkwardly thanked the king for his exceeding kindness, when suddenly the royal physiognomy changed, becoming as morose as it had before been radiant and good-tempered.

"What is this?" he said roughly, and frowning. "Are you out of temper? are you ill? why do you call me *sire?* Does my visit interrupt some intrigue?"

"No, sire," replied the young girl, recovering her serenity and frankness. "I am no intriguer, neither have I a lover."

"So much the better. But, after all, if it were so, what would that matter to me; only I should desire you to avow it."

"To avow? M. le capitaine means me to confide in him, without doubt?"

"Explain the difference."

"Monsieur le capitaine understands it already."

"As you will, but to distinguish is not to reply. If you were enamoured I should insist upon knowing it."

"I do not understand why."

"You have no idea at all? Come, look me in the face, your expression is very vague this morning."

"Monsieur le capitaine, it seems to me that you are aping the king. They say that when he questions a person whom he wishes to terrify, he looks them full in the eyes. Believe me, these tricks become him alone; and, still more, were he to come here, and subject me to them, I should beg him to leave me."

"So, mademoiselle, you would say to him, 'Get you gone, sire.'"

"Why not? The king's place is on his horse or on his throne, and, if his fancy led him to my house, I should have the right to refuse to submit to his ill-humour."

"There is reason in what you say; but in all this you make me no reply. You have loved?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And what has become of your lover?"

"He is dead!"

"But you are consoled for his loss?"

"No."

"Yet, should you go to Paris, and should Louis XV., that gallant cavalier——"

"I do not like kings, monsieur le capitaine; and I detest kings who are light-minded."

"Ah! I understand: you give the preference to pages; a handsome young cavalier like Trenck, for example."

"I have never thought about his face."

"And yet you have had relations with him?"

"Yes; they were those of a pure and honest friendship."

"You confess, then, that these relations have existed?"

"I did not say so," replied Consuelo, who feared to compromise the princess in any degree.

"Then you deny them?"

"I should have no reason for denying them had they ever existed. But how is it that Captain Kreutz questions me in this manner? What interest can he take in all this?"

"The king takes interest in it apparently," returned Frederick, taking off his hat, and placing it roughly on the head of the marble statue of the Muse Polyhymnia, which ornamented the console.

"If the king does me the honour to come and see me," said Consuelo, overcoming the terror which took possession of her, "I suppose he wishes to hear some music, and I will place myself at the harpsichord and sing him the air from the *Ariadne Abandonnée*."

"The king does not like his wishes to be anticipated. When he asks questions, he requires to be answered clearly and distinctly. What have you been doing in the king's palace during the past night? You perceive the king has a right to come and play the master in your house, since you go to his at unseasonable hours without his permission."

Consuelo trembled from head to foot; but happily, in all dangers, she possessed a presence of mind which up to this time had served her as by miracle. She remembered that Frederick often advanced what was false to arrive at the truth, and that he more frequently endeavoured to surprise a confession than attempted to extort it by other means. She kept on her guard, then, and smiling through her paleness, said: "Here is a singular accusation; I know not what reply can be made to such fantastic demands."

"You are no longer laconic as you were just now," returned the king. "How easy it is to see when you lie! Have you not been at the palace to-night? Answer me, yes or no?"

"Well then, no!" replied Consuelo, courageously; preferring the shame of being detected in a falsehood to the cowardice of disclosing the secret of another for her own exculpation.

"You did not leave it at three o'clock this morning, alone?"

"No," replied Consuelo, who recovered her strength as she saw an almost imperceptible irresolution in the king's countenance, and who was already affecting surprise with the most complete success.

"You have dared to say No three times," cried the king, with an irritated air and threatening look.

"And I shall dare to say it a fourth time, if your highness obliges me to do so," replied Consuelo, resolved to face the storm to the end.

"Oh! I know quite well that a woman would persist in falsehood through all kinds of torture, as the early Christians sustained what they thought to be the truth. Who could flatter himself with obtaining a sincere reply from a feminine creature? Listen, mademoiselle; until now I have entertained esteem for you, because I thought you the single exception to the vices of your sex. I thought you neither intriguing, perfidious, nor shameless. I had a sincere confidence in your character, which almost amounted to friendship—"

"And now, sire—"

"Do not interrupt me. Now I have my opinion, and you will feel the effects of it. But listen to me attentively. If you have the misfortune to mix yourself up with the petty intrigues of the palace, to accept certain misplaced confidences, to render certain dangerous services, you will hope in vain to deceive me for any length of time, and as I received you into my dominions with distinction and kindness, so will I drive you out of them with ignominy."

"Sire," replied Consuelo, boldly, "as my dearest and most constant desire is to leave Prussia, whatever may be the pretext of my dismissal, or the harshness of your language, I shall receive the order of my departure with gratitude."

"Ah! you take it thus," cried Frederick, transported with anger, "and you dare to speak to me in this manner;" at the same time lifting his cane as though he would have struck Consuelo; but the air of tranquil contempt with which she

awaited this outrage restored him to his senses, and he threw his cane far from him, saying, in a voice of emotion, "Pause awhile! forget the claims you have upon the gratitude of Captain Kreutz, and speak to the king with becoming respect; for if you drive me to extremities, I am capable of correcting you as I would a rebellious child."

"Sire, I know that children are beaten in your august family, and I have heard it said that your majesty, to escape from such treatment, was formerly obliged to take to flight. This remedy will be as easy to a Zingara like me as it was to the Prince Royal Frederick. If your majesty does not send me from your states in four-and-twenty hours, I shall take it upon myself to re-assure you as to my participation in intrigues, by quitting Prussia without a passport, though it be on foot, and by leaping the trenches like a deserter or a smuggler."

"You are mad," said the king, shrugging his shoulders, and walking up and down the apartment to conceal his vexation and repentance. "You shall go; I do not desire anything better, but without scandal and haste. I will not have you quit me thus, discontented with me and with yourself. Where the deuce did you get the insolence with which you are gifted? and what fiend inspires me with the good humour to submit to you?"

"It arises, doubtless, from a generous scruple with which your majesty may dispense. You think yourself indebted to me for a service which I should have rendered as zealously to the meanest of your subjects. Look upon yourself then as acquitted towards me, a thousand times over, and let me depart as speedily as possible: my liberty will be a sufficient recompense, and I will ask for no other."

"Again?" said the king, confounded at the hardy obstinacy of this young girl; "ever the same language? Will you always dispute with me? This is not courage, it is hatred."

"And if it were," returned Consuelo, "would your majesty care the least in the world for it?"

"Just Heaven! what are you saying, my poor little girl," said the king, with an accent of sincere grief; "you do not understand what you say, unhappy child! None but the most perverted spirit can be insensible to the hatred of a fellow-being."

"Does Frederick the Great look upon Porporina as a being of the same nature as himself?"

"Intellect and virtue alone can raise a man above his fellows. You possess genius in your art. Your conscience should tell you whether you also possess uprightness: but it tells you the contrary at this moment, for your soul is filled with hatred and anger."

"If it be so, has the conscience of Frederick the Great nothing with which to reproach itself for having aroused these evil passions in a heart habitually peaceable and generous?"

"Ah! you are in a passion," said Frederick, making a movement to take the young girl's hand, and then stopping short, restrained by that awkwardness which his contempt and aversion for women had led him to contract. Consuelo, who had exaggerated her displeasure that she might repress in the king's heart a feeling of tenderness which she saw ready to explode in the midst of his ill-humour, observed his timidity, and lost all her fears as she found that he waited for her advances. It was a singular destiny, that the only woman capable of exercising over Frederick a sort of *prestige* resembling love, was, perhaps, the only woman in his kingdom who would for no consideration have encouraged this disposition. It is true, that the pride and repugnance of Consuelo formed, perhaps, the principal attraction in the eyes of the king. Her rebellious spirit tempted the despot as the conquest of a province would have done, and without being aware of it himself, without attaching any glory to this frivolous class of conquests, Frederick felt admiration and instinctive sympathy for so powerful a character, which seemed, in some respects, to bear a sort of resemblance to his own.

"Come," said he, roughly thrusting the hand he had held out to Consuelo into the pocket of his waistcoat; "never tell me again that I do not care for being hated, for if so you will make me think I am hated, and the thought would be odious to me!"

"And yet you wish to be feared?"

"No, I would be respected."

"And is it by blows of the cane that your corporals inspire your soldiers with respect for your name?"

"How do you know anything about it? What are you speaking of? With what are you interfering?"

"I am answering the question of your majesty clearly and distinctly."

"Would you have me ask your pardon for a moment of anger provoked by your folly?"

"On the contrary, if you could break on my head the cane sceptre that governs Prussia, I would beg your majesty to take up the stick you have cast from your hand."

"Bah! suppose I had caressed you shoulders with it a little, as it is a cane Voltaire gave me, you would, perhaps, have only acquired more wit and malice. Stay, I value that cane highly, but I see I must make you some reparation." And speaking thus, the king picked up his cane, and endeavoured to break it; but in vain he employed all his strength: the cane bent and would not break. "See," said Frederick, throwing it into the fire, "my cane is not, as you pretend, the image of my sceptre. It is that of faithful Prussia, which yields to my will, and will never be broken by it. Do the same, Porporina, and you will find your account in it."

"What, then, is your majesty's will as concerns me? I am a noble subject, truly, for the exercise of authority, and well fitted to disturb the serenity of a great character!"

"My will is, that you give up the idea of quitting Berlin; do you find it displeasing to you?"

The lively and all but impassioned look of Frederick sufficiently explained this species of reparation. Consuelo felt her terrors return, and pretending not to understand him—

"To that," she replied, "I will never consent. I see too clearly that I must pay dearly for the honour of sometimes amusing your majesty by my singing. Suspicion rests upon everyone here. The most humble and obscure beings are not beneath accusation, and I cannot live thus."

"You are discontented with your salary?" returned the king. "Well! it shall be increased."

"No, sire; I am satisfied with my salary. I am not avaricious, as your majesty knows."

"True. It is but justice to say that you do not love money. Indeed, one cannot find out what it is you do love!"

"Liberty, sire!"

"And who interferes with your liberty? You seek some quarrel with me, and you know not how to bring it about. You wish to depart, this at least is clear."

"Yes, sire."

"Yes; is that quite decided?"

"Yes, sire."

"In that case, go to the devil!" and the king took his hat and his cane, which had rolled on the fire-irons, and had not been burnt; then turning his back, he moved towards the door; but as he was about to open it, he looked towards Consuelo, displaying a face so ingenuously sad, so paternally afflicted, so unlike, in a word, his terrible gaze-royal, or his bitter smile of sceptical philosophy, that the poor child felt herself moved and repentant. The habit of domestic storms into which she had fallen with Porpora, made her forget that there was in Frederick's heart something selfish and violent, which had never entered the chaste and generously ardent soul of her adopted father. She turned aside to hide a tear, which escaped from her eyelid, but the glance of the lynx is not more rapid than was that of the king. He turned back, and again raising his cane, but this time with the tenderness he would have shown in his sports with the child of his bosom. "Detestable creature!" he said, in a troubled and caressing voice, "you have not the least friendship for me!"

"You deceive yourself greatly, monsieur le baron," replied the good-natured Consuelo, fascinated by this pretended rage, which made amends for the real fit of anger indulged in by Frederick; "I have as much friendship for Captain Kreutz, as I have dislike for the King of Prussia."

"That is because you do not understand, because you cannot understand, the King of Prussia," returned Frederick; "therefore, do not let us speak of him. A day will come, when you shall have lived long enough in this country to know its spirit and its wants, and you will render more justice to the man who is obliged to govern it as he finds best. In the meantime, be a little more kind to the poor baron, who is so profoundly weary of the court and its courtiers, and who comes here to seek calm and happiness with a pure spirit and a candid mind. I had but one hour to profit by it, and you have done nothing but quarrel with me. I will return at some other time, upon condition that you receive me better. I will bring you Massule for your amusement, and if you are very good, I will bring you a present of a beautiful little white greyhound, which she is nursing at this

moment. You must be very careful of it. Ah! I forget! I have brought you some verses of my own composition; some stanzas upon music; you can adapt them to an air, and my sister Amelia will amuse herself by singing it."

And the king quietly retired, having turned back several times, conversing with a graceful familiarity, and lavishing frivolous cajoleries on the object of his patronage. He knew how to say nothings when he pleased, though in general his manner of speaking was concise, energetic, and full of good sense. No man possessed more of what is called *de fond* in conversation, and nothing was more rare at this period than this firm and serious tone in familiar intercourse.

But, with Consuelo, he desired to be amiable, and so far succeeded as greatly to astonish her. When he had gone, she repented, as usual, not having found it possible to disgust him with her, and his fancy for these dangerous visits. On his side, the king departed half discontented with himself. He loved Consuelo after a manner of his own, and desired to inspire her in reality with the attachment and admiration his false friends professed for him. He would, perhaps, have given much, he who did not like to give at all, once in his life to know the pleasure of being loved sincerely, without disguise or reservation.

But he felt that this was not easy to reconcile with the authority of which he would never consent to divest himself, and like a cat, satiated with food, who plays with a mouse ready for flight, he scarcely knew whether he most desired to tame or to strangle Consuelo.

"She will go too far, and all this will have a bad ending," he said to himself, as he stepped into his carriage. "If she continues to oppose me I shall be obliged to accuse her of some fault, and send her to a fortress for a little while, that the regimen may blunt her proud courage. Yet I would dazzle and govern her by the prestige I exercise over so many. It is impossible that with a little patience I should not succeed. It is a labour which irritates and amuses me at the same time. We shall see! One thing is certain, she must not depart now, to go and boast of having told me truths with impunity. No, no! she quits me only submissive or crushed."

And then the king, who had many other things on his

mind, as may well be believed, opened a book that he might not lose five minutes in useless reverie, and left his carriage almost forgetting the ideas with which he had entered it.

La Porporina, uneasy and trembling, dwelt for some time longer on the dangers of her situation. She reproached herself greatly for not having insisted to the last upon her departure, and for having tacitly engaged herself to renounce it. But she was roused from these meditations by the arrival of money and letters from Madame de Kleist, to be forwarded to Monsieur de Saint Germain. These were destined for Trenck, and Consuelo must accept the responsibility. She must also, if need were, accept the part of one beloved by the fugitive, for the preservation of the Princess Amelia's secret. She saw herself, therefore, entangled in a dangerous and disagreeable situation, rendered all the worse by her not feeling assured of the good faith of those mysterious agents with whom she was placed in communication, and who seemed desirous to interfere at the same time in her own private affairs. She busied herself with her disguise for the opera ball, where she had accepted a rendezvous with Saint Germain, acknowledging to herself, with helpless terror, that she was on the brink of an abyss.

CHAPTER X.

Immediately after the opera, the theatre was boarded over, decorated according to custom, and the grand *bal masque*, called at Berlin the *rédoubte*, commenced precisely at midnight. The company was tolerably mixed, since the princes, and perhaps even the princesses of the blood-royal, mingled with the actors and actresses of the different theatres. La Porporina stole thither alone, disguised as a nun, a costume which enabled her to conceal her neck and shoulders beneath the conventual veil, and her figure in the folds of an ample dress. She felt the necessity of remaining unknown, that she might escape the observations her meeting with M. de Saint Germain might give rise to; and she was not sorry to have this opportunity of testing the perspicacity

of the magician, who had boasted that he should recognise her in whatever disguise she might adopt. She had therefore composed this simple and easy dress with her own hands, without even admitting her servant to her confidence, and had issued forth well enveloped in a long pelisse, which she only quitted upon finding herself in the midst of the crowd. But she had not made the round of the theatre, before she observed a circumstance which gave her great uneasiness. A mask, about her own height and figure, and apparently of the same sex, dressed in the costume of a nun exactly similar to hers, came and placed itself frequently before her, jesting at their identity.

"Dear sister," said this nun, "I desire greatly to know which of us is the shadow of the other; and as it seems to me that you are more frail and transparent than I, I ask leave to touch your hand, that I may assure myself if you be my twin-sister or my ghost."

Consuelo repulsed these attacks, and endeavoured to gain her dressing-room, that she might change her costume, or in some degree modify it, so as to avoid mistakes. She feared lest the Count de Saint Germain, who, in spite of her precautions, might have gained information as to her disguise, should address her *Sosie*, and speak to her of the secrets he had announced the preceding night. But she had no time to carry this into effect. Already a capuchin was in pursuit of her, and quickly took possession of her arm, whether she would or not.

"You shall not escape me, my sister," he said in a low voice; "I am your father-confessor, and I am going to tell you your sins. You are the Princess Amelia."

"You are a novice, brother," replied Consuelo, disguising her voice, according to the custom of *bals masques*. "You are but ill acquainted with your penitents."

"Oh! it is useless to disguise your voice, sister. I know not if you wear the costume of your order, but you are the Abbess of Quedlimberg, and you may well confess to me, who am your brother Henry."

Consuelo did indeed recognise the voice of the prince, who had often spoken to her, and who had a species of *grasseyement* sufficiently remarkable. That she might assure herself that her *Sosie* was indeed the princess, she still persisted in her denial, and the prince added—

"I saw your costume at the tailor's, and as there are no secrets for princes, I surprised yours. Come, do not let us lose time in chatting. You cannot intend to puzzle me, my dear sister, and it is not to torment you that I have attached myself to your footsteps. I have important things to say to you. Come to some retired place with me."

Consuelo allowed the prince to lead her aside, resolved to show him her features rather than abuse his mistake, and thus become acquainted with family secrets. But, at the first word he addressed to her when they had gained a box, she became attentive in spite of herself, and thought she had the right to listen to the end.

"Take care how you trust La Porporina too far," said the prince to his supposed sister; "not that I doubt her discretion and nobleness of heart. The most important persons of the Order are her guarantees, and were you to jest with me again on the nature of my sentiments for her, I should tell you that I share in your sympathy for this charming woman. But neither those persons nor myself are of opinion that you should associate yourself with her until they are well assured of her dispositions. An enterprise which at once and irresistibly seizes upon an ardent imagination like yours, and a justly irritated spirit like mine, may at first terrify a timid girl, a stranger without doubt to all philosophy and politics. The reasons which have weighed with you are not those which would make an impression upon a woman placed in so different a sphere. Leave the care of this initiation therefore to Trismegistus or Saint Germain."

"But has not Trismegistus departed?" said Consuelo, who was too good an actress not to be able to imitate the harsh changing voice of the Princess Amelia.

"You should know that better than I, since this man is connected with you alone. As for me, I do not know him. But M. de Saint Germain appears to me the most skilled and the most extraordinarily versed in the science which engages our attention. He has undertaken to attach this beautiful singer to our interests, and to save her from the dangers which threaten her."

"Is she really in danger?" asked Consuelo.

"She will be if she persist in repulsing the sighs of monsieur le marquis."

"What marquis?" asked Consuelo, astonished.

"You are very absent, my sister! I spoke to you of Fritz, or the grand lama."

"Oh, yes! the Marquis de Brandebourg," replied Porporina, understanding at last that he referred to the king. "But you are quite sure that he thinks of this girl?"

"I do not say that he loves her, but he is jealous of her. And then, my sister, you must be perfectly well aware that you compromise this fair creature by taking her into your confidence. However, I know nothing about that, and I will know nothing; only, in the name of heaven! be prudent, and do not let our friends suspect that you are actuated by any other feeling than that of political liberty. We have resolved to adopt your Countess de Rudolstadt. When she shall be initiated and bound by oaths, promises, and threats, you will no longer run any risk with her. Until then, I conjure you, abstain from seeing her, and speaking to her of your affairs and ours. And to begin, do not remain in this hall, where your presence is scarcely correct; the grand lama will certainly know you have been here. Take my arm to the door. I cannot conduct you further. I am supposed to be under arrest at Potsdam, and the walls of the palace have eyes which would pierce a mask of iron."

At this moment some one knocked at the door of the box, and as the prince did not open it, persisted in an attempt to enter.

"Here is some impertinent fellow forcing his way into a box occupied by a lady!" said the prince, showing his bearded mask at the grating of the box. But a red domino with a pale face, whose appearance had in it something terrifying, presented itself before him, and said with a singular action, "*Il pleut.*"

This piece of news appeared to make a great impression on the prince. "Shall I leave or shall I remain here?" he asked of the red domino.

"You must seek," replied the domino, "for a nun in a dress exactly like the one before us, who is wandering about the crowd; I will take charge of madame," he added, pointing to Consuelo, and entering the box which the prince hastened to throw open to him. They exchanged a few whispered words, and the prince went out without addressing another word to La Porporina.

"Why!" said the red domino, seating himself in the box

and addressing Consuelo, "why have you taken a disguise exactly like that of the princess? By so doing, you are running the risk of exposing her as well as yourself to fatal mistakes. In this conduct I recognise neither your usual freedom nor devotion."

"If my costume resembles that of any other here, I am entirely ignorant of it," returned Consuelo, who kept on her guard with this new interlocutor.

"I thought it was a carnival pleasantry, perhaps, arranged between you two. But since it was not intentional, madame la comtesse, and since chance alone has brought it about, let us speak of yourself, and abandon the princess to her destiny."

"But if anyone be in danger, monsieur, it does not seem to me the part of those who speak of devotion to look on with their arms folded."

"The person who has just left us will watch over the august simpleton. Doubtless you are not unaware that the matter interests others besides ourselves, for this person also pays you court!"

"You are mistaken, monsieur; I know this person no more than you do. Moreover, your language is neither that of a friend nor a jester. Permit me, therefore, to return to the hall."

"Permit me to ask you first for a portfolio which you are commissioned to deliver to me."

"I cannot; I am commissioned with nothing for anyone."

"Well; you are right to answer thus. But with me it is useless. I am the Count de Saint Germain."

"I do not know that."

"Were I even to take off my mask, as you have only seen my features by night, you would not recognise me. But here is my credential."

The red domino presented Consuelo with a sheet of music, accompanied by a sign she could not misunderstand. She gave him the portfolio, not without trembling, and was careful to add—

"Take notice of what I say. I am charged with no message for you; it is I alone who give you these letters and the bills of exchange accompanying them, for the person you know of."

"Then it is you who are the mistress of the Baron de Trenck."

Consuelo terrified at the painful falsehood exacted from her, kept silence.

"Haply, madame," said the red domino, "the baron does not conceal from us that he receives consolation and assistance from a person who loves him. It is you, then, who are the friend of the baron?"

"It is," replied Consuelo, firmly; "I am as much surprised as I am hurt by your questions. Can I not be the friend of the baron without exposing myself to the coarse expressions and outrageous suspicions with which you are pleased to accuse me?"

"Your position is too serious to allow of your dwelling upon words. Listen attentively: you charge me with a commission which may compromise me, and which exposes me to personal dangers of more than one description. There may be some political intrigue under all this, in which I should not care to be mixed up. I have given my word to the friends of M. de Trenck to serve him in a love affair. Let us understand each other clearly; I have not promised to serve a *friendship*. The word is too vague, and fills me with anxiety. I know that you are incapable of telling a falsehood. If you tell me positively that De Trenck is your lover, and if I may report this to Albert de Rudolstadt——"

"Just Heaven! monsieur, do not torture me thus. Albert is no more!"

"According to the phraseology of men, he is dead; but for you as well as for me he is eternally living."

"If you mean in a religious and symbolical sense, it is true; but, if it be in a material sense—"

"Do not let us discuss the point. A veil still hangs over your mind, but this veil will be lifted. What it now concerns me to know is your position with respect to Trenck. If he be your lover, I will take charge of this communication upon which his life may depend, for he is cut off from all resources. If you refuse to satisfy me, I shall refuse to be your intermediator."

"Well," said Consuelo, with a painful effort, "he is my lover. Take the portfolio, and hasten to deliver it to him."

"It is enough," said M. de Saint Germain, taking the port-

folio. "Now, noble and courageous girl, allow me to tell you that I admire and respect you. This is but a proof to which I desired to submit your devotion and self-denial. Yes, I know all; I know quite well that you have told this falsehood through generosity, and that you are sacredly faithful to your husband. I know that the Princess Amelia, while making use of me, disdains to grant me her confidence, and that she labours to free herself from the tyranny of the grand lama without ceasing to play the part of the proud and reserved princess. She is well suited to her part, and does not blush to expose you, a poor girl, unconnected and alone (as the world says), to an eternal misfortune; yes, to the greatest of misfortunes; that of preventing the brilliant resurrection of your husband, and of plunging his present existence into doubt and despair! But, happily, between the soul of Albert and your own, a chain of invisible hands is unceasingly extended, to keep up a connection between her who acts upon earth in the light of the sun, and him who labours in an unknown world, in the mystery of shadow and gloom, far from the vulgar gaze."

This strange language disturbed Consuelo, much as she had determined to defy equivocal declarations and pretended philosophers.

"Explain yourself, monsieur le comte," said she, forcing herself to preserve a cold calm tone. "I know well that Albert's part is not over on earth, and that his soul is not annihilated by the cold blast of death. But the connection which can exist between him and me is shrouded with a veil which my death alone can raise, if it is the will of God to leave us a vague remembrance of our preceding existence. This is a mysterious subject, and it is not in the power of anyone to aid in the heavenly influence which will unite in a future life those who have loved each other here below. What do you mean, then, by saying that certain sympathetic beings watch over me to effect this reconciliation?"

"I can speak to you of myself only," replied M. de Saint Germain, "and can but tell you, that having known Albert in all times, as well when I served under his orders in the war of the Hussites against Sigismund, as late in the thirty years' war, when he was ——"

"I know, monsieur, that you pretend to recall all your anterior existences, and Albert was unhappily and fatally pos-

sessed with the same idea. God knows, I never suspected his good faith in this respect; but this conviction was so blended in him with a state of delirious excitement, that I have never believed in the reality of this exceptional and, it may be, inadmissible power. Spare me, then, the embarrassment of listening to the eccentricities of your conversation on this head. I know that many people, urged by a frivolous curiosity, would willingly consent to be in my place, and receive, with a smile of encouragement and pretended credulity, the marvellous histories which, it is said, you relate so well. But I know not how to act a part when I am not obliged to do so, and I cannot amuse myself with your so-called reveries. They recall too vividly those which so alarmed and afflicted me in the Count de Rudolstadt. Deign to reserve them for those who can enter into them. Nothing in the world should induce me to deceive you by feigning belief; and even if they awakened no cruel remembrance, I should still be unable to assent to them. Will you reply to my questions then, without seeking to bewilder my judgment by vague words with double meanings. To assist your frankness, I will tell you that I already know that you have particular and mysterious designs upon me. You are to initiate me into some formidable secret, and persons of high rank rely upon you to give me the first rudiments of some nameless occult science."

"Persons of high rank talk sometimes in a strange manner, madame la comtesse," said the count, with great calmness. "I thank you for the candour with which you speak to me, and I will abstain from touching on things you do not understand, perhaps for want of the desire to understand them. I will only tell you that there is, in fact, an occult science on which I pique myself, and in which I am assisted by superior intelligences. But this science has nothing supernatural in it, since it is simply and purely that of the human heart, or, if you like it better, an intimate acquaintance with human life, in its most hidden springs, and most secret acts. And to prove to you that I am no vain boaster, I will tell you exactly what has passed in your own heart since you have been separated from the Count de Rudolstadt, if you will only authorise me to do so."

"I consent," replied Consuelo; "for on this point I know you cannot deceive me."

"Well then, you love for the first time in your life; you

love completely, truly; and he whom you thus love, with tears of repentance, for you did not love him a twelvemonth ago, he whose absence is so bitter to you, and whose disappearance has rendered your life desolate, is not the Baron de Trenck, for whom you entertain only a friendship of gratitude and tranquil sympathy; it is not Joseph Haydn, who is but a younger brother in art to you; it is not the King Frederick, who at the same time terrifies and interests you; it is not even the handsome Anzoleto, whom you can no longer esteem: it is he whom you have seen stretched upon a bed of death, clothed in those trappings which the pride of noble families place even in the tomb: it is Albert de Rudolstadt."

Consuelo was for a moment struck by this revelation of her most intimate feelings, from the mouth of a man of whom she knew nothing. But as she remembered that she had related her whole life, and unreservedly opened her heart the preceding night to the Princess Amelia, while she recalled all that Prince Henry had just disclosed respecting the connection of the princess with a mysterious society, in which the Count de Saint Germain played one of the principal parts, her astonishment ceased, and she at once exclaimed that it was no great merit to be acquainted with particulars so recently confided to an indiscreet friend.

"You would speak of the Abbess of Quedlimberg," said M. de Saint Germain. "Well, then, will you believe in my word of honour?"

"I have no right to question it," replied Porporina.

"I give you my word of honour, then," returned the count, "that the princess has not told me a syllable concerning you, for the sole reason that I have not had the pleasure of exchanging a single word with her, nor with her confidante, Madame de Kleist."

"Yet, monsieur, you have relations with her, at least indirectly?"

"As to that, all my relations with her consist in conveying Trenck's letters and receiving hers for him through the medium of a third person. You see that her confidence in me does not go very far, since she persuades herself that I am ignorant of the interest she takes in our fugitive. For the rest this princess is not perfidious, she is only mad, as tyrannical persons become when they are oppressed. The

servants of truth have hoped great things from her, and have awarded her their protection. Heaven grant they may find no cause to regret it!"

"You judge unfavourably of an interesting and unfortunate princess, monsieur le comte; it may be you are ill acquainted with her affairs. As for me, I know nothing of them——"

"Do not tell useless falsehoods, Consuelo. You supped with her last night, and I can relate you all the circumstances."

Here the Count de Saint Germain repeated the most trifling details of the previous night's supper, from the conversation of the princess and Madame de Kleist to the dresses they wore, the bill of fare of the repast, the *rencontre* with *the sweeper*, &c. Nor did he stop there, but even mentioned the visit the king had paid our heroine that morning, the words exchanged between them, the cane lifted over Consuelo, the threats and the reparation of Frederick, all, to the slightest gesture and expression of their countenances, as though he had taken part in the scene. He ended by saying—

"And you were very wrong, generous child that you are, to allow yourself to be caught by this return of kindness and friendship which the king knows how to use on occasions. You will repent it. The royal tiger will make you feel his claws, at least, unless you accept a more efficacious and honourable protection; a protection truly paternal and all-powerful, not confined to the narrow limits of the marquisate of Brandebourg, but which will watch over you through the whole world, and follow you even to the deserts of the new."

"I know of none but God," replied Consuelo, "who can exercise such a protection, and who will extend it to a being insignificant as myself. If I run any danger here, it is in Him I place my hope. I distrust all other solicitude of which I know neither the means nor the motives."

"Distrust but ill becomes lofty souls," replied the count, "and it is because Madame de Rudolstadt has a great soul, that she has a right to the protection of the true servants of God; this is the only motive of that which is offered you. As for its means, they are immense, and differ as much in their power and morality from those which kings and princes possess, as the cause of God differs in its sublimity from

that of the vain-glorious despots of this world. If you have love, a confidence in nothing but divine justice, you are forced to recognise its influence on good and intelligent men, who are the ministers of his will here, and the executors of his supreme law. To protect the weak, to oppose tyranny, to encourage and reward virtue, to spread the principles of morality, to preserve the sacredness of honour, such has been in all times the mission of an illustrious but unhappy phalanx, which, under various names, and in various forms, has been perpetuated from the foundation of society to our own days. Look at the gross and anti-human laws which rule nations! observe the prejudices and the errors of men! behold everywhere the monstrous traces of barbarism! How can you conceive, that in a world so ill managed, through the ignorance of the masses and the perfidy of governments, any virtue should still flourish, any true doctrines be still circulated? Yet it is so, and we see spotless lilies, purest flowers, souls like yours and Albert's, flourish and shine amidst the terrestrial mire. But do you think they could retain their perfume, protect themselves from the venomous bites of reptiles, and offer effectual resistance to the storm, if they were not supported and preserved by helping powers, by friendly hands? Do you think that Albert, that sublime being, stranger as he is to every ignoble impulse, to every thought of evil, is so superior to humanity as to be looked upon as mad by the profane? Do you believe that Albert found in himself alone all his grandeur and faith? Do you think he was an isolated fact in the universe, and that he never sought new strength in the sympathy and hopes of others? And do you think that even you would ever have been what you are if a divine breath had not passed from Albert's soul into yours? But now that you are separated from him, thrown into a sphere unworthy of you, exposed to all the perils which wait upon an actress, the confidante of an enamoured princess, can you hope to preserve the integrity of your primitive innocence, if the mysterious wings of archangels be not spread around you as a celestial shield? Take heed, Consuelo! it is not in yourself, or at least, in yourself alone, that you will find the strength of which you stand in need. Even the prudence you boast of will become an easy prey to the stratagems of the spirit of evil which wanders in the dark around your maiden court.

Learn then to respect the holy militia, the invisible army of faith, which is already forming a rampart around you. It exacts from you neither engagements nor services, it simply commands you to be docile and trusting when you feel the unexpected effects of its benevolent adoption. It is for you to reflect on my words, and when the time comes in which you shall see prodigies taking place around you, remember that everything is possible to those who believe and work together, to those who are equal and free; yes, to such nothing is impossible when they wish to reward exalted merit, and if yours prove itself worthy of obtaining from them a sublime reward, know that they may even restore Albert to life and to you."

Having thus spoken in a tone animated by the enthusiasm of conviction, the red domino rose, and without waiting for a reply, bowed to Consuelo, and quitted the box, where she remained for some moments motionless and lost, as it were, in strange reveries.

CHAPTER XI.

No longer thinking of anything but retiring, Consuelo at length descended and met in the corridors two maskers who accosted her, and one of whom said to her in a low voice,

"Take care how you trust to the Count de Saint Germain."

She thought she recognised the voice of Uberti Porporina, her theatrical companion, and seizing him by the sleeve of his domino, said,

"Who is the Count de Saint Germain? I do not know him."

But the other mask, without seeking to disguise his voice, which Consuelo immediately recognised for that of the young Benda, the melancholy violinist, took her other hand, saying—

"Distrust all adventures and adventurers."

And they precipitately passed on, as though to avoid her questions.

Consuelo was surprised at being so easily recognised, in

spite of the pains she had taken to disguise herself, and consequently hastened to leave. But she soon saw that she was observed and followed by a mask, in whose walk and figure she thought she recognised M. de Pœlnitz, the director of the Theatre Royal and the king's chamberlain. Her doubts vanished when he addressed her, in spite of his endeavours to change his pronounciation and tone. His conversation being frivolous, she made no reply, though clearly perceiving his desire to make her speak. She succeeded at last in getting rid of him, and crossed the theatre, that he might not again be able to find her should his desire to follow her be renewed. There was a great crowd, and she had some difficulty in gaining the door. At the moment of doing so, she turned to assure herself that she was not observed, and was surprised to see Pœlnitz, to all appearance, talking confidentially in a corner with the red domino, whom she supposed to be the Count de St. Germain. Porporina was not aware that Pœlnitz had known him in France, and fearing some treason on the part of the adventurer, she returned home full of anxiety, not so much on her own account as for the princess, whose secret she had just given up, spite of herself, to a man strongly suspected.

When she awoke on the morrow, she found a wreath of white roses suspended above her head, round the crucifix which she inherited from her mother, and from which she had never parted. At the same time she remarked that the branch of cypress, which, from a certain evening of triumph at Vienna, when it had been thrown on the stage by an unknown hand, had never ceased to ornament the crucifix, had disappeared. In vain she sought for it on all sides. It seemed as if in placing this fresh and sparkling wreath in its stead, this mournful trophy had been purposely removed. Her servant could neither tell her in what way, nor at what hour this change had been effected. She pretended not to have quitted the house on the preceding evening, and to have given admittance to no one; neither had she observed, as she prepared her mistress's bed, whether the crown was there at that time or not. In one word, she was so ingenuously astonished at the circumstance that it was difficult to suspect her perfect good faith. Moreover, this girl was of a most disinterested character, of which Consuelo had received more than one proof, while the only fault which

could be laid to her charge was a great propensity for talking, and for making her mistress the confidant of all her gossip. She would not have missed the opportunity of wearying her with a long recital of the most minute details, had she had anything to tell. As it was, she could but give way to extravagant remarks upon the mysterious gallantry of this wreath; and Consuelo was now so wearied by them that she begged her not to trouble herself any longer about it, and to leave her in peace. Once alone, she examined the wreath with the greatest care. The flowers were as fresh as though they had only been gathered the moment before, and as full of perfume as if it were in the midst of summer. Consuelo sighed bitterly as she thought that such beautiful roses were to be found at this season in no other place than the royal green-houses, and that her maid might well attribute this homage to the king. "And yet he did not know how much I valued my cypress," thought she; "why has he taken it from me? Wherefore, indeed! Accursed be the hand that committed this sacrilege, to whomsoever it may belong!" But as Porporina angrily threw the crown far from her, a small piece of parchment fell from it, which having picked up, she read the following words in an unknown handwriting—

"Every noble action deserves its reward, and the only reward worthy of great minds, is the homage of sympathetic spirits. Let the cypress disappear from your court, generous sister, and let these flowers bind your brow, if it be but for a moment. It is the diadem of your betrothal; it is the token of your eternal league with virtue, and that of your admission to the communion of believers."

Consuelo, stupified, examined the characters for some time, her imagination in vain trying to detect in them some resemblance to the writing of Count Albert. In spite of the distrust inspired by the species of irritation to which she appeared to be subjected; in spite of the repugnance she experienced for the promises of magic, then so universal throughout Germany and the whole of philosophical Europe; in short, in spite of the warnings her friends had given her to hold herself on her guard, the last words of the red domino, and the expressions of this anonymous billet, inspired her imagination with that buoyant curiosity which should rather be called a poetical aspiration. Without

clearly knowing why, she obeyed the affectionate injunction of these unknown friends. She placed the wreath on her disordered hair, fixing her eyes upon a glass, as though she expected to see a beloved and cherished shade behind her.

She was aroused from her reverie by a violent ring at the bell, which made her tremble, and a servant came to inform her that M. de Buddenbrock had a message to give her directly. This message was delivered with all the arrogance of a king's aide-de camp, when he is no longer beneath the eyes of his master.

"Mademoiselle," said he, as soon as he had entered the salon, "you must follow me directly to the king; make haste, for the king must not be kept waiting."

"I shall not go to the king in my slippers and dressing gown," replied Porporina.

"I will give you five minutes to dress yourself," returned Buddenbrock, drawing out his watch, and making her a sign to withdraw into her chamber.

Consuelo, alarmed, but resolved to take upon herself all the dangers and misfortunes which might threaten the princess and the Baron de Trenck, dressed in less time than had been allowed her, and re-appeared before Buddenbrock, apparently tranquil. The aide-de-camp had seen the irritated air of the king as he gave orders for the delinquent to be brought before him, and the royal ire had entered into himself, though he knew not what had excited it. But as he found Consuelo so calm, he remembered that the king had a great affection for this young girl, and he thought to himself that she might issue victorious from the struggle in which she was about to engage, and retain a dangerous recollection of his bad treatment. He deemed it best, therefore, to assume a more humble tone, reflecting that it would be always time to oppress her when her disgrace should be consummated. He offered her his hand with a formal and awkward courtesy to assist her into the carriage he had brought with him; and assuming an important, self-sufficient air—

"Well, mademoiselle," said he, seating himself *vis-à-vis* to her, hat in hand, "here is a magnificent winter morning!"

"Certainly, monsieur le baron," returned Consuelo, with

a mocking expression, "the weather is magnificent for a drive beyond the walls."

As she spoke thus, Consuelo reflected with stoical enjoyment, that she might indeed pass the remainder of this magnificent day upon the road to some fortress. But Buddenbrock, who could not conceive this severity of heroic resignation, thought that she was threatening him with disgrace and imprisonment if she should triumph in the severe trial she was about to confront. He turned pale, strove to the utmost to be agreeable, and unable to succeed, remained gloomy and disconcerted, asking himself in anguish, in what he could have displeased La Porporina.

Consuelo was introduced into a small apartment, where she had leisure to admire the rose-coloured furniture, faded and soiled by the little dogs which were incessantly rolling and jumping about it, powdered over with snuff, and, in a word, extremely dirty. The king was not there, but she heard his voice in a neighbouring apartment, and a terrible voice it was when he was in anger.

"I tell you I will make an example of these *canaille*, and purge Prussia from this vermin which has overrun it too long!" he cried, making his boots resound, as though he were pacing the apartment in great agitation.

"And your majesty will render a great service to reason and Prussia," replied his interlocutor; "but that is no reason, only a woman——"

"Yes, it is a reason, my dear Voltaire. Then you know not that the worst intrigues and the most infernal machinations are produced from those little brains?"

"A woman, sire! a woman!"

"Well, repeat it again if you will! You like the women! You have had the misfortune to live under petticoat government, and you do not know that they must be treated like soldiers, like slaves, when they meddle in serious affairs."

"But your majesty cannot imagine that there is anything serious in this affair! Cooling potions and shower-baths are the remedies proper to be employed with fabricators of miracles, and adepts in the great work of projection."

"You know not what you are talking about, Monsieur de Voltaire! What if I were to tell you that this poor La Mettrie has been poisoned?"

"As all are who eat more than their stomachs can digest. Indigestion is not a poisoning."

"I tell you it is not his gourmandising alone which has killed him. They made him eat a *pâté d'aigle* by telling him it was a *pâté de fasian*."

"The Prussian eagle is very murderous, I know; but it is with powder, and not with poison that it strikes."

"Well, well, spare me your metaphors. I will wager a hundred to one that this is a case of poisoning. La Mettrie had given in to their extravagances, poor devil, and related to whoever would listen to him, half seriously, half in jest, that they had caused him to see ghosts and demons. They had, in fact, set this credulous and frivolous man mad. But, as he had abandoned Trenck, after having been his friend, they have punished him in a manner of their own. I will in my turn punish them, and they shall long remember is. As for those who, under cover of their infamous tricks, plot conspiracies and elude the vigilance of the law——"

Here the king closed the door, which had remained half open, and Consuelo heard no more. After a quarter of an hour of painful anxiety, the terrible Frederick at last appeared, frightfully disfigured by passion. He closed all the doors carefully, without looking at or speaking to her, and when at last he turned towards her, there was something so diabolical in his eyes, that for a moment she thought he meant to strangle her. She knew that in these excesses of fury he sometimes returned, in spite of himself, to the ferocious instincts of his father, and that he did not hesitate to bruise the legs of his public functionaries by hearty kicks, when he was discontented with their conduct. La Mettrie laughed at these cowardly brutalities, and assured everyone that this exercise was good for the gout, with which the king had been prematurely attacked. But La Mettrie could no longer make the king laugh, or laugh at his expense. Although young, active, and healthful, he had died two days before, after an excess at table, and some gloomy fancy suggested to the king the idea of attributing his death sometimes to the hatred of the Jesuits, sometimes to the machinations of the fashionable sorcerers. Frederick was himself, though not avowing, under the influence of that vague and puerile terror with which the occult sciences inspired all Germany.

"Listen to me attentively!" he said to Consuelo, darting a dreadful look at her; "you are unmasked, you are lost; you have but one means of saving yourself, that is, to confess all this very moment, honestly and unhesitatingly." And as Consuelo was preparing to reply: "On your knees, unfortunate creature; on your knees!" he cried, pointing to the ground; "it is not standing you can make such a confession. Your brow should already be humbled to the dust. To your knees, I tell you, or I will not listen to you."

"As I have absolutely nothing to tell you," replied Consuelo, in a calm tone, "you have nothing to hear; and as for kneeling before you, you will never make me do so."

For a moment the king thought of trampling her beneath his feet. Consuelo involuntarily looked at Frederick's hands, which were stretched convulsively towards her, till she almost fancied she could see his nails lengthen and stand out from his fingers like the claws of a cat about to rush on its prey. But the royal claws were as quickly sheathed. Frederick, in the midst of his meanness, had too much grandeur of mind himself not to admire courage in others. He smiled while affecting a contempt he was far from feeling.

"Miserable child!" said he, with an air of pity; "they have succeeded in making a fanatic of you. But listen! the moments are precious. You may yet purchase your life; in five minutes it will be too late. I give you five minutes; use them to advantage. Determine to reveal everything, or prepare to die."

"I am prepared," replied Consuelo, indignant at a threat which she thought it impossible that he should carry into execution, and which she believed to have been devised to frighten her.

"Be silent, and take time for reflection," said the king, seating himself before his desk, and opening a book with an affectation of tranquillity which could not altogether conceal deep and painful emotion. Consuelo, while remembering how grotesquely M. de Buddenbrock had aped the king in also allowing her, watch in hand, five minutes for dressing, determined to employ the time prescribed to her in tracing out a plan of conduct. She felt that the thing most to be avoided was the skilful and searching interrogatories with which the king was about to encircle her as with a net Who could hope to deceive such a judge? She would only

risk falling into his snare, and might betray the princess while intending to save her. She took the generous resolution, therefore, not to seek to justify herself, not even to ask of what she was accused, and to irritate her judge by her audacity, till he should arbitrarily pronounce sentence upon her *ab irato*. Ten minutes passed thus before the king raised his eyes from his book. Perhaps he desired to give her time to think better of her situation; perhaps his reading had absorbed him.

"Have you come to a resolution?" he asked, at last laying down his book and crossing his legs, his elbow leaning on the table.

"I have no resolution to come to," replied Consuelo; "I am under the dominion of injustice and violence, and nothing remains for me but to submit to the consequences."

"Is it I whom you tax with violence and injustice?"

"If it be not you, it is the absolute power you exercise, which degrades your character and misleads your judgment."

"Good! you take upon yourself to judge my conduct, forgetting that you have but few moments to save yourself from death."

"You have not the right to dispose of my life; I am not your subject; and if you violate the rights of nations so much the worse for you. As for me, I would rather die than live one day longer under your laws!"

"Your hatred towards me is at all events ingenuous!" said the king, who seemed to penetrate the design of Consuelo, and to render it of no effect by arming himself with a contemptuous *sang froid*. "But you are ill acquainted with the rights of nations and human laws. Your sovereign has the right to put to death whoever comes into his states to conspire against him."

"I conspire?" cried Consuelo, carried away by the consciousness of truth, and too indignant to exculpate herself; and she turned away as though she would depart, not knowing clearly what she was about.

"Where are you going?" said the king, struck with her air of innocence.

"I am going to prison, to the scaffold, or wherever you wish, provided only that you spare me this absurd accusation."

"You are in a passion," replied the king, with a sardonic

laugh. "Shall I tell you why? It is because you came here to play the part of a heroine before me, and now you see that your acting only serves me as an amusement. Nothing is more mortifying, especially for an actress, than to fail in her part."

Consuelo, disdaining to reply, crossed her arms, and looked fixedly at the king, with an assurance which all but disconcerted him. To smother the passion which was once more swelling within him, he was obliged to break the silence and fall back upon his raillery, always hoping to irritate the accused, and lead her to lay aside her reserve and distrust in self-defence.

"Yes," said he, as though in reply to the dumb language of her altered expression, "I know quite well that they have made you believe I am in love with you, and that you think you can brave me with impunity. All this would be very amusing, if it did not happen that other persons for whom I entertain more regard than I feel for you, are mixed up in this affair. Although allured by the vain hope of playing a noble part, you should yet know that the subaltern confidants are always sacrificed to those who employ them. Thus it is not those I am resolved to punish; they are too closely connected with me to be reached otherwise than through you. It is for you to determine if you will submit to this misfortune for those who have betrayed your interests, and who have laid all the blame upon your indiscreet and ambitious zeal."

"Sire," replied Consuelo, "I know not what you mean; but the manner in which you speak of confidants and those who employ them, makes me shudder."

"That is to say?——"

"That is to say you make me think that when you were yourself the principal victim of tyranny, you delivered Major Ratt to the paternal inquisition."

The king turned pale as death. Everyone knows that, after an attempted flight to England in his youth, Frederick had seen the head of his confidant cut off by the orders of his father. Whilst shut up in prison he had been conducted to the window and held there by force, that he might see the blood of his friend flow upon the scaffold. This horrible scene, of which he was wholly innocent, had made a terrible impression upon him. But it is in the destiny of princes to

follow the example of despotism, even when they themselves have suffered most cruelly from it. Frederick's mind had been warped by misfortune, and at the close of an enslaved and unhappy youth, he mounted the throne full of the principles and prejudices of absolute authority. No reproach could be more cutting than that which Consuelo feigned to address to him, that she might recall to his mind his former misfortunes, and thus make him feel his present injustice. He was struck to the heart, but the effect of the wound was as little salutary on his hardened soul as had been the execution of Major Ratt. He rose, and said, in an altered tone—

"Enough; you may retire."

He rang, and during the few seconds which elapsed before the arrival of the page, re-opened his book, and pretended to be engrossed by its contents. But a nervous trembling shook his hand and rustled the leaf which he forced himself to turn.

A servant entered, the king made him a sign, and Consuelo was conducted into another apartment. One of the king's little greyhounds, which had never ceased wagging its tail, and gamboling around her to provoke her caresses, attempted to follow her, and the king, who had no paternal feeling save for these little animals, was obliged to call Massula back, at that moment when he was crossing the threshold after the condemned. The king had a fancy, not perhaps devoid of reason, of believing that his dogs were gifted with a species of instinctive divination as to the sentiments of those who approached him. He entertained distrust of all those whom he saw them persist in disliking, and on the contrary, persuaded himself that he might rely upon those whom his dogs willingly caressed. In spite of his inward agitation, the marked sympathy of Massula for La Porporina had not escaped his observation, and when the dog came towards him with drooping head and sad wistful air, he struck his hand upon the table, saying to himself, as he thought of Consuelo, "And after all she has no bad intentions towards me!"

"Did your majesty call me?" said Buddenbrock, presenting himself at another door.

"No!" said the king, indignant at the *empressement* with which the courtier fell upon his prey; "leave me; I will ring when I want you."

Hurt at being treated like a servant, Buddenbrock retired,

and during several minutes passed by the king in meditation Consuelo was kept under the eyes of her guard in the Salle des Gobelins. At last the bell was heard, and the mortified *aide-de-camp* was not less prompt to rush to his master. The king appeared softened and communicative.

"Buddenbrock," said he, "this girl is an admirable creature! At Rome she would have deserved a triumph, a car with eight horses and crowns of oak! Cause a post-chaise to be got ready, conduct her yourself outside the town, and put her under a good escort upon the road to Spandau, to be there shut up and subjected to the discipline of state-prisoners, and that of the most gentle kind; do you hear?"

"Yes, sire."

"Wait a little. Get into the carriage with her as you go through the town, and frighten her by your conversation. It will do her good to make her think she is to be given up to the executioner and flogged over all the causeways of the town, as was the practice in the time of my father, the king. But, while telling her these tales, remember that you are not to hurt a hair of her head, and put on your glove when you offer her your hand. Go and learn, as you admire her stoical devotion, how to conduct yourself towards those who honour you with their confidence. That will do you no harm."

CHAPTER XII.

Consuelo was re-conducted to her house in the same carriage which had brought her to the palace. Two soldiers were placed before each door of her apartment, in the interior of the house, and M. Buddenbrock gave her, watch in hand, according to his habit of imitating the rigid punctuality of his master, one hour to make her preparations, not, however, without cautioning her that the packages would be examined by the officers of the fortress she was about to inhabit. Upon entering her chamber, she found all her effects in picturesque disorder. During her conference with the king, the agents of the secret police had gone, by his orders, to force her locks and take possession of all her papers. Consuelo, who possessed no other manuscripts than

her music, felt some sorrow as she thought she might perhaps never again see her cherished and precious authors, the only riches she had amassed during her life. She regretted much less some trinkets which had been given to her by several grand personages at Vienna and Berlin, as a recompense for her singing. They were seized, on the pretence that they might contain poisoned rings or seditious emblems. The king knew nothing about these, and Consuelo never saw them again. The petty officers of Frederick gave themselves up without shame to these honest peculations, receiving but little pay elsewhere, and knowing that the king would rather shut his eyes to their thefts than increase their salaries.

Consuelo's first search was for her crucifix; and, seeing they had not thought of seizing that, she quickly took it down from the wall and put it in her pocket. She saw the faded crown of roses lying on the floor, and, upon picking it up to examine it, remarked with terror that the slip of parchment, containing the mysterious words of encouragement, was no longer attached to it. It was the only proof they could have of a complicity with a pretended conspiracy, and to how many comments might this feeble index give rise! While searching anxiously for it, she put her hand into her pocket and found it there. She had put it there mechanically, at the moment when Buddenbrock had come to seek her an hour before. Re-assured on this point, and knowing that they would find nothing among her papers which could compromise any one, Porporina hastened to gather together the articles necessary for an absence, the duration of which she well knew it was impossible to determine. She had no one to assist her, for her servant had been arrested; and, in the midst of her costumes, torn from the wardrobes, and thrown in disorder on the different pieces of furniture, she had some difficulty in finding what she wanted. Suddenly the noise of some heavy object falling in the middle of the chamber, attracted her attention; it was a large nail thrust through a note. The style was laconic:—

"Do you wish to fly? Show yourself at the window, and in three minutes you shall be in safety."

The first impulse of Consuelo was to run to the window. But she stopped half-way, as she thought that her flight, in case it could be effected, would seem like the avowal of her

culpability, and such an avowal, in such a case, always supposes accomplices.

"Oh! Princess Amelia!" thought she, "if it be true that you have betrayed me I will never betray you! I will discharge my debt to Trenck. He saved my life; if it must be so, I will lose it for him."

Animated by this generous idea, she finished her package with great presence of mind, and was quite ready when Buddenbrock came to warn her that the time of departure had arrived. She thought his manner more hypocritical and disagreeable than usual. At once haughty and servile, Buddenbrock was jealous of his master's sympathies, like old dogs who attack all the friends of the house. He had been wounded by the lesson the king had given him, and he longed to avenge himself upon her.

"I am greatly pained, mademoiselle," he said to her, "to be obliged to execute such rigorous orders. Since the time of King Frederick William, the august father of his present majesty, there has been nothing at all resembling them. That was a cruel example of the severity of our laws, and the terrible power of princes. I shall remember it all my life."

"What example are you speaking of, monsieur?" said Consuelo, who began to believe that her life was in danger.

"Of none in particular," replied Buddenbrock; "I would speak generally of the reign of Frederick, which was, from beginning to end, an example of firmness never to be forgotten. In those times neither age nor sex was respected, when there was a grave fault to be punished. I remember one young person, very pretty, well born, and exceedingly amiable, who, because she had sometimes received the visits of an august person against the wishes of the king, was given up to the executioner, and driven from the town, having first been flogged with rods."

"I know that history, monsieur," returned Consuelo, divided between terror and indignation. "The young person in question was well conducted. All her crime consisted in having taken part in some music with his present majesty, as you say, who was then prince royal. Has this same Frederick, then, suffered so little from the catastrophes he had drawn upon the heads of others, that he would now terrify me with a threat of similar infamy?"

"I think not, signora. His majesty never does anything

that is not great and just; and it is for you to know whether or not your innocence protects you from his anger. I would willingly believe so; yet I saw the king just now irritated as he never was before. He exclaimed that he was wrong to try to govern by indulgence, and that never in his father's lifetime would a woman have dared to show such audacity as yours. Some other words dropped by his majesty, made me fear some disgraceful punishment; I knew not what; I will not even guess. My part in this is very painful; and if when we reach the city gates, I find the king has given contrary orders to those which I have received, to conduct you immediately to Spandau, I shall hasten to withdraw; the dignity of my office not allowing me to assist."

M. Buddenbrock seeing he had produced the desired effect, and that the unhappy Consuelo was ready to faint, stopped. At this moment she all but repented her devotion, and could not help invoking in her heart her unknown protectors. But as she fixed her haggard eyes upon the features of Buddenbrock, she saw the hesitation of falsehood, and began once more to feel assured. Nevertheless her heart beat as though it would burst her breast, when an agent of police presented himself at the gate of Berlin, to exchange some words with M. de Buddenbrock. In the meantime, one of the mounted grenadiers who accompanied the carriage, approached the opposite door, and said to her rapidly, in a whisper, "Be easy, signora, much blood will be shed before any evil is allowed to befall you." In her confusion, Consuelo failed to distinguish the features of the unknown friend, who immediately withdrew. The carriage took the road to the fortress at full gallop, and in an hour, Porporina was incarcerated in the château of Spandau with all the customary formalities, or rather with the few formalities, which absolute power had occasion to employ. This citadel, at that time considered impregnable, was built in the middle of a lake formed by the confluence of the Havel and the Spree. The day had become dark and foggy, and Consuelo having accomplished her sacrifice, experienced that exhaustion and apathy which sometimes follow deeds of energy and enthusiasm. She allowed herself therefore to be conducted into the sad domicile assigned her without noticing anything around her. She felt exhausted, and though it was scarcely noon, threw herself, dressed as she was, upon her bed, and fell fast asleep. To fatigue

was united that exquisite feeling of security which a good conscience ensures, and though her bed was hard and narrow, she enjoyed a delicious slumber. For some time she had only been dosing, when she heard midnight strike by the clock of the citadel.

On awakening she was astonished at finding that she did not suffer from cold, and was thankful that she should, at least, be spared this physical discomfort, which is the most effectual bar to thought. The wind sighed mournfully without, the rain drove against the casement, and Consuelo saw nothing but the close grating of her narrow window on the dark and clouded face of the starless night.

The poor captive passed the first hours of this new and untried suffering in great peace of mind. But by degrees the tension fatigued her brain, the night began to wax heavy, and her reflections changed into vague and eccentric reveries. Fantastic images, painful remembrances, and terrible apprehensions, assailed her, till she found herself in a state which was neither sleeping nor waking, and where all her ideas took form and seemed to float in the shadows of her cell. Sometimes she thought herself on the stage; she was singing a part which greatly fatigued her, and the remembrance of which haunted her, spite of her efforts to get rid of it; sometimes she saw herself in the hands of the executioner, with bare shoulders, in the presence of a brutal and curious crowd, and torn to pieces with rods, while the king looked on with a furious air from a high balcony, and Anzoleto laughed in a corner. At last she fell into a sort of torpor, when the only thing before her eyes was Albert extended upon his cenotaph, and making useless efforts to rise and come to her assistance. Then this image was effaced, and she thought she was sleeping under ground in the grotta of Schreckenstein, while the sublime and heart-rending tone of Albert's violin, sent up from the depths of the cavern an eloquent and mournful tone. The tones were so firmly sustained though weakened by the distance, and the modulation so distinct, that she felt persuaded she really heard it, without dreaming of being astonished. It seemed to her as though these extraordinary sounds lasted for more than an hour, and ended by dying gradually and almost imperceptibly away. Consuelo had fallen asleep again, and the day was beginning to dawn when she re-opened her eyes.

Her first care was to examine her chamber, which she had not even looked at the evening before, so much had her mental life absorbed all consciousness of physical existence. It was an unfurnished cell, but clean and well warmed by a brick stove, which was supplied from the exterior, and which threw no light into the apartment, but which kept up a comfortable temperature. One single arched opening gave light to the room, which, nevertheless, was not very dark; the walls were low, and whitewashed. Three knocks at the door were now heard, and the keeper cried, in a loud voice—

"Prisoner No. Three get up and dress yourself; I shall return in a quarter of an hour."

Consuelo hastened to dress and make her bed before the return of the jailer, who brought her some bread and water for provision through the day, with a very respectful air. He had the stiff bearing of an old major-domo of some noble house, and placed the frugal prison allowance upon the table with as much care and propriety as though he were serving a most *recherché* repast.

Consuelo examined this man, who was of advanced age, and whose gentle and refined physiognomy had nothing at first sight repulsive in it. He had been chosen to wait upon the women because of his correct morals and good manners, and fidelity beyond all proof. He was called Schwartz, and mentioned his name to Consuelo.

"I live underneath you," said he, "and if you should be taken ill, you have only to call me from your window."

"Have you not a wife?" asked Consuelo.

"Doubtless," he replied, "and if you absolutely need her services, she will be at your command. But she is forbidden to communicate with the lady prisoners, unless in cases of illness. The physician determines this. I have also a son, who will share with me the honour of serving you."

"I do not want so many servants, and if you will permit me, Monsieur Schwartz, I will have nothing to do with any one but you and your wife."

"I know that my age and appearance gives the ladies confidence. But there is no occasion to distrust my son any more than myself; he is a good-natured fellow, pious, gentle, and very firm."

The jailer pronounced this last word with an emphasis which the prisoner well understood.

"Monsieur Schwartz," said she, "you will have no need of firmness with me. I am here almost voluntarily, and have no intention of escaping. So long as I am treated with respect and decency, as at present it seems I shall be, I will endure, without complaint, the discipline of the prison, however rigorous it might be."

As she spoke thus, Consuelo, who had eaten nothing for four-and-twenty hours, and who had suffered from hunger all the night, broke some brown bread, and began eating. She remarked that her resignation made an impression upon her old keeper, and that he was at once astonished and annoyed by it.

"Your ladyship has no repugnance then to this coarse treatment?" said he, with some embarrassment.

"I will not conceal from you, that for my health's sake, I should in time desire something more substantial; but if I must content myself with this, I shall not be greatly disturbed."

"And yet you are accustomed to live well? At home, you keep a good table, I suppose?"

"Yes, beyond doubt."

"Then," said Schwartz, with an insinuating air, "why do you not have suitable meals provided for you here, at your own expense?"

"Is it allowed?"

"Certainly," cried Schwartz, whose eyes brightened at the idea of exercising his trade, having feared to find his prisoner too poor or too abstemious to allow him this profit. "If your ladyship has had the precaution to conceal some money before coming here, it is not forbidden even to furnish any nourishment you may like. My wife is a very good cook, and we possess some very neat articles for the table in plated silver."

"That is very amiable on your part," said Consuelo, who discovered the cupidity of Monsieur Schwartz with more disgust than satisfaction. "But the question is to know whether I have indeed any money. I was searched when I came here; I know they left me a crucifix, which I greatly value, but I have not observed whether they took my purse."

"Your ladyship has not observed?"

"No; does that astonish you?"

"But your ladyship doubtless knows what there was in the purse?"

"Money." And as she said this, Consuelo searched in her pockets without finding a single coin. "Monsieur Schwartz," she said with a courageous gaiety, "I see that they have left me nothing. I must therefore be content with the prison regimen. So do not deceive yourself upon that head."

"Well, madame," replied Schwartz, not without a visible effort over himself, "I am going to prove to you that my family is honest, and that you have to do with worthy people. Your purse is in my pocket; here it is!" and he shook the purse before the eyes of Porporina, and then quietly replaced it in his pocket.

"May it profit you!" said Consuelo, astonished at his impudence.

"Wait a little!" returned the avaricious, yet timid Schwartz. "It is my wife who searched you. She has been ordered not to leave any money with the prisoners for fear they should corrupt their guard. But when the guards are incorruptible, the precaution is useless. She did not deem it her duty, therefore, to give up your money to the governor. But as there is a trust to which one is obliged, in conscience, to conform, your purse must not return directly into your hands."

"Keep it, then," said Consuelo, "since such is your pleasure."

"Beyond doubt, I shall keep it, and you will thank me for doing so. I am the depository of your money, and I will employ it for your wants, as you think best. I will bring you what viands you prefer; I will carefully supply your stove; I will even furnish you with a little bed and linen at discretion. I will make up my account every day, and will pay myself out of your money so long as it lasts."

"That is right!" said Consuelo. "I see that we shall find means of arranging this matter; and I appreciate the honesty of Monsieur Schwartz as I ought. But when this sum, which is not very considerable, shall be exhausted, will you furnish me with the means of procuring a further supply?"

"Your ladyship must not express yourself thus. To do so would be to fail in my duty, and I will never consent to that. But your ladyship shall not suffer; you shall direct me, either at Berlin or elsewhere, to the person in charge of

your funds, and I will present my weekly accounts to this person that they may be regularly discharged. My orders will not interfere with this."

"Very well. You have found means of correcting these orders, which are very inconsistent, since they permit you to treat us well, and yet deprive us of the means of inducing you to do so. When my ducats have come to an end, I will take care to satisfy you. Begin, then, by bringing me some chocolate; provide me with a chicken and some vegetables at dinner; for the day you shall procure me some books, and you shall furnish me with a light in the evening."

"For the chocolate, your ladyship shall have it in five minutes; the dinner shall come as if by clockwork; I will add to it some good soup, and some dainties which ladies never disdain and coffee, which is very salutary as an antidote to the damp air of this residence. As for books and lights, it is impossible. I should be dismissed at once, and my conscience forbids me to neglect my orders."

"But *recherché* viands and dainties are equally prohibited?"

"No. We are permitted to treat ladies, and particularly your ladyship, with humanity, in all which concerns their health and comfort."

"But *ennui* is equally prejudicial to health?"

"Your ladyship is deceived. By good nourishment, and keeping the mind quiet, everyone here grows fat. I could tell you of a certain lady who entered as slender as you are now, and who, at the end of twenty years, quitted, weighing at least a hundred and eighty pounds."

"Many thanks, Monsieur Schwartz. I do not desire such formidable *embonpoint*, and I hope you will not refuse me a light and some books."

"I humbly ask your ladyship's pardon, I must not infringe on my duties. Besides, your ladyship will not experience *ennui*; you will have your harpsichord and music here."

"Indeed! Do I owe this consolation to you, Monsieur Schwartz?"

"No, signora; these are the orders of his majesty, and I have here an order from the governor to let the said things pass and be deposited in your chamber."

Consuelo, enchanted at being allowed her music, thought not of asking for anything else. She took her chocolate

gaily, while M. Schwartz arranged her furniture, composed of a poor bed, two straw chairs, and a small deal table.

"Your ladyship will want a chest of drawers," said he, with that caressing air which people assume who are disposed to overwhelm us with cares and attentions for the sake of our money; "and then a better bed, a carpet, a desk, a foot-stool, a toilette table."

"I will accept a chest of drawers and a toilette table," replied Consuelo, who desired to economise her resources. "As for the rest, I can dispense with them. I am not delicate, and I beg you will only furnish me with what I ask for."

Master Schwartz shook his head with an astonished and half-contemptuous air; but he made no reply, and when he had rejoined his worthy spouse—

"She has no harm in her," said he, speaking of the new prisoner, "but she is poor. We shall make no great profit out of her."

"What could you expect her to spend?" returned Madame Schwartz, shrugging her shoulders. "She is no great lady; she is but an actress, as they tell me!"

"An actress!" cried Schwartz. "Ah! I am delighted for the sake of our son Gottlieb."

"Fie!" returned Madame Schwartz, frowning. "Would you make a mountebank of him?"

"You do not understand me, wife. He will be a pastor; I will not give that up. He has studied for it, and he is the right sort of man for it. But as he must preach, and up to this time he has shown no great eloquence, this actress shall give him lessons in declamation."

"The idea is not bad, provided she does not diminish the bills we present by deducting from them the price of her lessons."

"Make yourself easy; she has not the wit to do that!" replied Schwartz, grinning and rubbing his hands.

CHAPTER XIII.

The harpsichord arrived in the course of the day. It was the same which Consuelo had hired at her own expense at Berlin, and she was well pleased not to have to risk a new acquaintance with another instrument, which might prove less sound and agreeable. On his side, the king, who kept a watch over the minutest affairs, had taken care to inform himself, when he gave the order for the harpsichord to be forwarded to prison, whether it belonged to the prima-donna or not; and on learning that it was only hired, he had caused the proprietor to be informed that he would guarantee its restitution, but that the hire must remain at the charge of the prisoner. Upon which the instrument-maker ventured to observe that he had no means of redress against a person in prison, above all, if she should chance to die. M. de Pœlnitz, who was charged with this important negotiation, replied, laughingly—

"My dear sir, you would not trouble the king about such a trifle; and besides, you would gain nothing by it. Your harpsichord is seized upon to be enrolled upon the jailer's books at Spandau this very day."

The manuscripts and scores belonging to Porporina were also brought her; and as she was wondering at such amenity in the prison regulations, the chief governor of the prison paid her a visit, to explain that she would have to continue her engagement as first singer at the Theatre Royal.

"Such is the will of his majesty," said he. "Every time that your appearance at the opera is announced upon the programme, a carriage with an escort will conduct you to the theatre at the hour named, and bring you back to sleep at the fortress directly the representation is over. These removals will take place with the greatest punctuality, and with all the respect due to you. I hope, mademoiselle, that you will not oblige me, by any attempt to escape, to redouble the rigour of your captivity. Agreeably to the orders of the king, you have been placed in a room with a fire, and you will be allowed to walk on the rampart, which you can see from hence, whenever it shall please you to do so. In a

word, we are responsible, not only for your person, but for your health, and the preservation of your voice. The only constraint you will experience from us is, that you will be kept confined, and that you will not be allowed to communicate with any one, whether inside or outside the prison. As we have few ladies here, and our jailer suffices for the department you occupy, you will not be annoyed by the attendance of rude people. The honest face and good manners of Monsieur Schwartz ought to set you at ease on this point. Some degrees of *ennui*, then, will be the only evil you will have to endure, and I conceive that, at your age, and in the brilliant situation you occupy—"

"Make your mind easy, monsieur le major," replied Consuelo, with some pride, "I never know *ennui* when I can occupy myself. I ask but one favour: it is that I may have the means of writing, and a light by which to practise my music during the evening."

"That is quite impossible. I am in despair to be obliged to refuse the only demand of so courageous a person. But I can, in compensation, authorize you to sing at all hours of the day and night, if it should so please you. Your chamber is the only one occupied in this isolated tower. The jailer's apartments are beneath you, it is true; but Monsieur Schwartz is too well educated to complain at having to listen to so beautiful a voice; while, as for me, I regret that I shall not have the opportunity of enjoying it."

This dialogue, in which Maître Schwartz assisted, was terminated by profound bows, and the old officer withdrew, convinced, from the tranquillity of the singer, that she was there for some infraction of the discipline of the theatre, and for a few weeks at most. Consuelo herself knew not whether she laboured under the suspicion of being an accomplice in some political conspiracy, or whether her sole crime consisted in having rendered assistance to Frederick de Trenck, or, in short, whether she suffered for having simply been the discreet *confidante* of the Princess Amelia.

For two or three days, our captive felt more uneasiness, sadness, and *ennui*, than she would confess to herself. The length of the nights, which were still fourteen hours at this season of the year, was above all disagreeable, so long as she hoped to be able to obtain a light, ink, and pens, fron Monsieur Schwartz. But it was not long before she became

convinced that this obsequious person was gifted with an inflexible obstinacy. Schwartz was not ill-natured, nor did he possess, like most of his species, a taste for inflicting suffering. He was even pious and devout in his way, thinking to serve God and secure his own salvation, provided he conformed to those engagements of his profession which he could not elude. It is true that these expectations were rare, and that they related chiefly to those articles in which he had less chance of profit from his prisoners than danger of losing his place.

"Is she not silly," he said, speaking of Consuelo to his wife, "to imagine that to gain a few groschen a day, or a candle, I would expose myself to the chance of being dismissed?"

"Take good care," replied his wife, who was the Egeria of his avaricious inspiration, "that you do not advance a single dinner when her purse is exhausted."

"Do not make yourself uneasy. She has savings, she tells me, and M. Porporino, the opera-singer, is the depository of them."

"That is but a poor guarantee," replied the woman. "Read the code of our Prussian laws; you will find one relating to actors, by which they are exonerated from all claims upon them. Take care that the fund-holder of the said young lady does not invoke this law, and refuse you the money when you present him with your accounts."

"But since her engagement at the theatre is not broken by her imprisonment, since she is to continue her avocation, I will prefer my claim to the cashier of the theatre."

"And who can assure you that she will receive her salary? The king knows the law better than any one else; and if it be his good pleasure to invoke it—"

"You think of everything, wife," said M. Schwartz. "I will be upon my guard. No money! then no dinners, no fire, and furniture according to rule. The orders must be observed to the letter."

It was thus that the Schwartz couple discoursed respecting the fate of Consuelo. As for herself, when she felt quite assured that the honest jailer was incorruptible with regard to the light, she arranged her days so as to suffer as little as possible from the length of the nights. She refrained from singing while daylight lasted, that she might reserve this

occupation for the evening. She abstained as much as possible from ever thinking of music or entertaining her mind by musical recollections or inspirations before the hours of darkness set in, while she gave the morning and the day to reflections suggested by her position, to the remembrance of the events of her life, and to dreamy speculations on the future. In this manner she soon succeeded in dividing her life into two portions, one wholly philosophical, the other wholly musical; and she found that, with exactness and perseverance, one may, to a certain extent, regularly govern and subject to one's will the restive and capricious course of fancy, that fantastic muse of the imagination. By living soberly, in spite of the prescriptions and insinuations of M. Schwartz, and in taking a great deal of exercise on the ramparts, though without deriving pleasurable emotion from it, she succeeded in calming herself towards evening, and in employing agreeably those hours of gloom which prisoners, by trying to force slumber that they may escape *ennui*, fill with agitation and phantoms. In short, by giving but six hours to sleep, she was soon certain of sleeping peacefully every night, so that no excess of repose on one night infringed on the rest of the succeeding. At the end of eight days, she was already so far reconciled to her prison, that it seemed to her as though she had never known any other life. Her evenings, at first so dreaded, had become her most agreeable hours; and the darkness, far from causing the terror she had anticipated, revealed to her treasures of musical conception, that she had long borne in her mind without being able to clothe them in form, amidst the excitement of her profession. When she felt that improvisation on one side, and on the other the execution of passages from memory, sufficed to employ her evenings, she allowed herself to devote some hours of the day to noting down her inspirations, and to the study of her favourite composers, with more care than she had been able to give in the midst of a thousand emotions, and beneath the eye of an impatient and systematic composer. Two write her music she made use at first of a pin, by means of which she pricked the notes between the lines; then of small pieces of wood, broken from her furniture, which she blackened against the stove when its heat was greatest. But as these proceedings occupied time, and as she had but a small provision of ruled

paper, she found that it was better to exercise the powerful memory with which she was gifted, and to dispose in order there the numerous compositions to which every evening gave birth. She at length succeeded in this; and, while practising, could turn from one to another without confusion, though none had ever been written. Still, as her room was very warm, thanks to the increase of combustibles which M. Schwartz benevolently added to the ration of the establishment, and as the rampart on which she walked was unceasingly swept by an icy wind, she could not escape some days of cold and indisposition, which deprived her of the amusement of singing at the theatre of Berlin. The physician of the prison, who had been charged to see her twice a week, and to render an account of the state of her health to M. de Pœlnitz, wrote that her voice had entirely failed her, on the very day when the baron proposed, with the consent of the king, that she should re-appear before the public. Her going out was therefore deferred without causing her the least chagrin; she did not desire to breathe the air of liberty, before she had become sufficiently familiarised with her prison to return to it without regret.

Consequently, she did not treat her cold with that caution and solicitude which a singer usually bestows on that precious organ, her throat. She did not refrain from her walk, and the result was an attack of feverishness, which lasted for several nights. Then she imagined she heard the plaintive and eloquent tones of Albert's violin; sometimes loud and distinct as if the instrument were in her chamber, sometimes faint as though they came from the horizon. There was something painful in this fluctuation in the intensity of imaginary sounds. When the vibrations appeared to approach her, Consuelo was conscious of a feeling of terror; when they seemed to burst forth it was with a vigour which seemed to overwhelm the invalid. Then the sound grew feebler, yet she felt but little relief; for the fatigue of listening with an ever-increasing attention to a melody lost in space, soon caused her a species of swoon, during which she could hear no sound.

But as Consuelo experienced no alarm at her condition, and made scarcely any change in her diet, she was quickly restored to health, and enabled to renew her evening songs, while she recovered the profound sleep of her peaceful nights.

One morning, the twelfth of her captivity, she received a note from M. de Pœlnitz, giving her notice of her appearance for the following evening.

"I have obtained from the king," said he, "permission to come and fetch you myself in one of his private carriages. If you will give me your word not to try to escape, I even hope to be able to dispense with an escort, and to procure your re-appearance at the theatre without this lugubrious appendage. Believe me you have no friend more devoted than myself; I deplore the harshness and unjust severity of the treatment you endure."

La Porporina was somewhat astonished at the sudden friendship and delicate attentions of the baron. Hitherto, in his frequent intercourse with the *prima donna* as theatrical director, M. de Pœlnitz had always behaved towards her with great coldness and reserve. He had even commented upon her regular conduct and reserved manners with a certain disobliging irony. It was well known at court that the old chamberlain was the king's spy; but Consuelo was not initiated into the court secrets, and had no idea that this odious trade could be carried on without losing the advantages of apparent consideration from the great world. Still a vague repulsive instinct told Consuelo that Pœlnitz had contributed more than any one else to her misfortune. She therefore took heed to her words as she found herself alone with him, on the morrow, in the carriage which was conducting them rapidly to Berlin, towards the close of the day.

"Well, my poor recluse," he said to her, "here you are in a confounded scrape! I hope they are strict enough, these martinets of veterans who guard you! They would never allow me to enter the citadel, under pretence that I had not the necessary permission, and here, be it spoken without reproach, I have been waiting for you and freezing a whole quarter of an hour. Come, wrap yourself up in this fur cloak which I have brought, that you may not lose your voice, and then tell me something of your adventures. What took place at the last *bal masque?* All the world is inquiring, and no one knows. Two or three odd animals, who, as it seems to me, did no harm to any one, have disappeared as by enchantment. The Count de Saint Germain, who is one of your friends, I believe, a certain Trismegistus, who is said to be hidden at M. de Golowkin's, and with whom,

perhaps, you are also acquainted, for they say you are on good terms with all these children of mystery."

"Have these persons been arrested?" asked Consuelo.

"Oh! they have taken flight; both reports are spread about the town."

"If these persons know no more than myself, they are persecuted; they would have done better to wait for their justification quietly."

"Or for the new moon, which might have changed the monarch's humour; after all, this is the safest game, and I advise you to sing well this evening; it will have more effect upon him than fine words. How the deuce did you manage so badly, my beautiful friend, as to get yourself sent to Spandau? Never would the king pronounce so discourteous a condemnation on a lady for trifles such as those of which you are accused; you must have answered him arrogantly, with your nose in the air and your arms a-kimbo, like a little fool as you are. What have you done amiss? Come, tell me. I will undertake to arrange matters, and if you will follow my advice, you shall not return to that damp mouse-trap, Spandau, but shall sleep this evening in your pretty apartment at Berlin. Come, confess. They say you feasted secretly in the palace with the Princess Amelia, and that you amused yourself in the middle of the night by playing the ghost and acting the part of the *sweeper* in the corridors, to terrify the queen's maids of honour. They say also that you got your fortune told in the orrery of Madame de Kleist, and that M. de Saint Germain revealed to you the secret of Philippe-le-Bel's politics. Are you so simple as to believe that the king does anything more than laugh with his sister at these follies? The king also entertains for Madame l'Abbesse, a weakness which is almost puerile; and as for magicians, he only desires to know if they take money in exchange for their idle stories, in which case he simply begs them to leave the country. You see clearly that you deceive yourself as to the importance of the part you play, and that if you had vouchsafed to reply quietly to some trivial question, you would never have passed so sad a carnival in the state-prison."

Consuelo allowed the old courtier to proceed without interruption, and when he paused for a reply, she persisted in saying that she knew not on what subject he desired her

to speak. She suspected some snare beneath this benevolent frivolity, and would not allow herself to be caught.

Upon this Pœlnitz changed his tactics, and in a serious tone—

"It is well," said he, "you distrust me. I do not deserve it; on the contrary, I have a great respect for prudence. Since it is thus, mademoiselle, I will myself speak openly. I see that you are to be trusted, and that our secret is in good hands. Know then, Signora Porporina, that I am more your friend than you think for, for I am one of your number; I am of Prince Henri's party."

"Has Prince Henri a party, then?" said La Porporina, curious to learn the intrigue by which she was surrounded.

"Do not pretend ignorance of that," returned the baron. "It is a party which is greatly persecuted just now, but which is far from despairing. The Grand Lama, or, if you prefer it, M. le Marquis, is not so safe upon the throne that he cannot be displaced. Prussia is a good war-horse; but it must not be too much urged."

"So then, you are a conspirator, monsieur le baron? I should never have suspected so!"

"Who does not conspire at the present moment? The tyrant is surrounded by servants apparently devoted, but who are in reality sworn to his downfall."

"I think you very imprudent, monsieur le baron, to make me the partner of such a confidence."

"If I do so, it is because I am authorised by the prince and princess."

"Of what princess do you speak?"

"The one you know. I do not think the rest conspire, at least, unless it be the Margravine of Bareuth, who is discontented with her humble position, and angry with the king ever since he reprimanded her upon the subject of her understanding with Cardinal de Fleury. But that is already an old story; woman's anger is, however, of long duration, and the Margravine *Guillemette* has no common mind. What do you think of it?"

"I have never had the honour of hearing her speak a single word."

"But you have seen her with the Abbess de Quedlimberg!"

"I have been but once at the Princess Amelia's, and the

only person of the royal family whom I met there was the king."

"Never mind! Prince Henri has charged me to tell you——"

"Indeed, monsieur le baron!" said Consuelo, in a contemptuous tone, "the prince has charged you to tell me something?"

"You shall see that I am not joking. He would have you know that his affairs are not received as you have been induced to believe; that none of his confidants have betrayed him; that Saint Germain is already in France, where he is labouring to form an alliance between our conspiracy and that which is seeking to restore Charles-Edward to the English throne; that Trismegistus alone has been arrested, but that his escape will be effected, and in the meanwhile, he is sure of his discretion. As for you, he requires you not to allow yourself to be intimidated by the threats of the marquis, and, above all, to place no faith in those who pretend to be in your interest that they may make you speak. This is why, just now, I subjected you to a slight trial, from which you issued victorious; and I shall tell our hero, our brave prince, our future king, that you are one of the most trusty champions of his cause!"

Consuelo, amazed at the assurance of M. de Pœlnitz, could not refrain from laughing; and when the baron, piqued at her contempt, asked the cause of this ill-timed gaiety, she could make him no reply, but this:—

"You are admirable, sublime, monsieur le baron!" and she then recommenced laughing, in spite of herself. She would have laughed beneath the rod, like the Nicole of M. Jourdain.

"When this attack of the nervous is over," said Pœlnitz, not the least disconcerted, "perhaps you will deign to explain your intentions. Would you betray the prince? Do you, indeed, believe that the princess has given you up to the anger of the king? Do you look upon yourself as released from your oaths? Take care, mademoiselle, you may, perhaps, quickly repent. It will not be long before we give up Silesia to Maria Theresa, who has not abandoned her projects, and who will thenceforth become our powerful ally. Russia and France will certainly join hands with Prince Henri; Madame de Pompadour has not forgotten Frederick's scorn. A powerful coalition, some few years of conflict, may

easily hurl from his throne this proud sovereign, who now holds his power but by a thread. With the love of the new monarch you may aspire to high fortune. The least which can result from all this is, that the Elector of Saxony will be dispossessed of his Polish kingdom, and Prince Henri will reign in Warsaw. Thus——"

"Thus, monsieur le baron, there exists, according to you, a conspiracy which, for the gratification of Prince Henri, will, once more carry fire and bloodshed throughout Europe? And this prince, to satisfy his ambition, does not shrink from the shame of delivering his country to the foreigner? I have great difficulty in believing such things possible; and if, unfortunately, you speak the truth, I am deeply humiliated to be taken for your accomplice. But let us have an end of this farce, I beseech you. For the last quarter of an hour you have been ingeniously trying to wring from me an avowal of imaginary crimes. I have listened to you, that I might learn on what pretext I am detained in prison: it remains for me to discover how I have deserved the hatred which pursues me so basely. If you will inform me, I will endeavour to exculpate myself. Until then I can return no answer to all the fine things you have told me, unless it be that they surprise me greatly, and that such projects can find no sympathy with me."

"In that case, mademoiselle, if you are not better informed than you appear to be," replied Pœlnitz, excessively mortified, "I am astonished at the imprudence of the prince, who engaged me to speak unreservedly to you, that he might be assured of your adhesion to all his projects."

"I repeat, monsieur le baron, that I am altogether ignorant of the prince's projects; but I am quite sure of one thing, which is, that he has never charged you to tell me a single word. Forgive me for giving you the lie. I respect your age; but I cannot disguise my contempt for the base part you are acting towards me at this very moment."

"The absurd suspicions of a woman cannot affect me," replied Pœlnitz, who could no longer draw back from his falsehoods. "A time will come when you will do me justice. In the trouble which persecution causes, and with the gloomy ideas a prison must necessarily engender, it is not surprising that your penetration and foresight should suddenly desert you. We must expect such occurrences when

we conspire, above all from ladies. I pity and forgive you. Moreover, it is possible, that in all this you are but the devoted friend of Trenck, and the *confidante* of an august princess. These secrets are of too delicate a nature for me to speak of to you. Prince Henri himself shuts his eyes to them, though he knows quite well that the only motive which decided his sister to join the conspiracy, was the hope of seeing Trenck restored to his rights and privileges, and, perhaps, of marrying him."

"I know nothing about that either, monsieur le baron, and I think that were you sincerely devoted to the cause of a certain august princess, you would not relate such strange things concerning her."

The noise of the wheels upon the pavement put an end to the conversation, to the great satisfaction of the baron, who knew not what expedient to invent to get rid of the affair. They entered the theatre. The singer, escorted to the door of her dressing-room and behind the scenes by two sentinels, received but a cold reception from her companions. They liked her, but not one among them had the courage to protest by outward evidences against the disgrace and condemnation pronounced by the king. They were sad, constrained, and, as it were, struck with the fear of contagion. Consuelo, who would not attribute their manners to cowardice, but who set it down to compassion, thought she read in their depressed countenances her own sentence of lengthened captivity. She exerted herself to show them that she was not terrified, and made her appearance upon the stage with courageous confidence.

A singular event took place at that moment in the theatre. The arrest of Porporina had made considerable noise, and the audience being composed of persons devoted from principle or position to the royal will, every member of it thrust his hands in his pockets, that he might resist the desire or the habit of applauding the disgraced singer. The eyes of all were turned upon the monarch, who, on his side, cast investigating glances upon the crowd, seeming to impose upon them the most profound silence.

Suddenly a garland of flowers, whence thrown no one could detect, fell at the feet of the singer, and several voices, simultaneously, loud enough to be heard from the different parts of the theatre where the speakers had placed themselves, pro-

nounced these words:—"It is the king! it is the king's pardon!" This singular assertion passed from mouth to mouth with the rapidity of lightning, and every one thinking to fulfil his duty and please Frederick, a tempest of applause, such as in the memory of man had never before been heard of in Berlin, broke forth from the roof to the pit. For several moments, La Porporina, amazed and confounded at such an audacious manifestation, could not commence her part. The king, stupefied, turned towards the spectators with a terrible expression, which they mistook for a sign of sympathy and encouragement. Buddenbrock himself, placed not far from him, having inquired of young Benda what it all meant, and having been answered by him that the garland had come from the king's quarter, began to clap his hands with an expression of ill-humour truly comic. La Porporina thought she was dreaming, while the king pinched himself to make sure that he was awake.

Whatever was the cause and design of the triumph, Consuelo felt its salutary effects; she surpassed herself, and was applauded with the same transport during the whole of the first act. But between the acts, the mistake having been ascertained by degrees, there was but one portion of the audience, and that the most obscure, and the least likely to be set right by the confidence of the courtiers, who persisted in their signs of approbation. At last, between the second and third acts, the orators of the corridors and the green-room informed every one that the king appeared greatly discontented with the insane conduct of the public; that a cabal had been displayed for La Porporina with an unheard-of audacity; in short, that whoever should be pointed out as having taken part in this rash enterprise would certainly repent it. While the third act was proceeding, the silence was so profound in the theatre, in spite of the marvels performed by the *prima donna*, that the buzzing of a fly might have been heard at the close of every song sung by her, while the rest of the singers obtained all the advantages of the re-action.

As for La Porporina, her triumph had quickly lost its illusion.

"My poor friend," said Conciolini to her, as he presented her with the garland behind the scenes, after the first act, "I pity you for having such dangerous friends. They will put a finishing-stroke to your disgrace."

Between the acts Le Porporino came to her dressing-room, and speaking in a low voice, remarked—

"I told you to mistrust M. de Saint Germain; but it was too late. Every party has its traitors. Nevertheless, be faithful to friendship and obedient to the voice of your conscience. You are protected by a more powerful arm than that which oppresses you."

"What do you mean?" cried La Porporina, "are you among those——"

"I say that God will protect you!" replied Le Porporino, who seemed to fear being overheard, as he pointed to the partition which divided the dressing-room of one actor from that of another. These partitions were ten feet high, but they left a considerable space between the top and the common ceiling, so that what was said in one room could easily be heard in another. "I foresaw," said he, speaking still lower, and giving her a purse, "that you would need money, and I have therefore brought you some."

"I thank you," replied Consuelo; "if the jailer, who sells me provisions dear enough, comes to you for payment, as there is sufficient here to serve him for some time, refuse to settle his accounts. He is an extortioner."

"Enough," said the good and faithful Porporino. "I must leave you; I should but aggravate your position did I appear to have secrets with you."

He withdrew.

The king having sent for Pœlnitz, demanded—

"Well, have you questioned her? Have you found means to make her speak?"

"No more than a post," replied the baron.

"Did you make her understand that I would forgive her all if she would only tell me what she knows of the *sweeper*, and what Saint Germain told her?"

"She cared no more for that than a tale of the year one."

"Did you terrify her with the length of her captivity?"

"Not yet. Your majesty told me to deal with her quietly."

"You must terrify her as you conduct her back to Spandau."

"I will try, but I shall not succeed."

"Is she then a saint, a martyr?"

"She is a fanatic."

"In that case, I will give her up to her fate. The opera season ends in a few days; arrange that this girl may be dispensed with till then, and do not let me hear her spoken of till next year."

"A whole year! Your majesty will never hold out."

"Better than your head will hold to your neck, Pœlnitz!"

CHAPTER XIV.

On his way back to the fortress with Consuelo, Pœlnitz, who was very indifferent to the contempt entertained for him, and who had already forgotten that which she had shown him, conducted himself candidly enough with her, confessing, unsought, that he knew nothing, and that all he had said of the prince's project, with regard to foreign power, was but a gratuitous commentary upon the eccentric conduct and secret connections of the prince and his sister with suspected people.

"This commentary reflects no honour upon the sincerity of your lordship," replied Consuelo, "and it may be that you should scarcely boast of it."

"The commentary is not mine," replied Pœlnitz tranquilly; "it had its rise in the brain of the king our master: a sickly and glowing brain, if you will, when suspicion once takes possession of it. As for giving suppositions for certainties, it is a matter so consecrated by the usage of courts and the service of diplomatists, that it is quite absurd of you to be scandalised by it. For the rest, I have learnt it of kings; it is they who have educated me, and all my vices descend to me, as from father to son: from two Prussian monarchs whom I have had the honour of serving. We must plead falsehood to arrive at truth! Frederick never does anything else, and he is esteemed a great man; that's what it is to have a name in the world, while I am treated as a villain because I follow his aberrations; what prejudice!"

Pœlnitz teazed Consuelo as much as he could, that he might learn what had passed between her, the prince, the abbess, Trenck, the adventurers Saint Germain and Tris-

megistus, and a great number of important personages, who, as he said, were concerned in an inexplicable intrigue. He frankly avowed that if this affair had any certainty in it, he should not hesitate to expose it. Consuelo soon saw that he was speaking in good faith; but as she really knew nothing, there was no merit in her continued denials.

When Pœlnitz had seen the doors of the citadel close upon Consuelo and her imagined secret, he pondered on the conduct he should adopt towards her; and ended by hoping that he should win her confidence if, thanks to him, she obtained her return to Berlin; to which end he resolved to exculpate her with the king. But at the first word on the morrow the king interrupted him:—

"What has she resolved?"

"Nothing, sire."

"In that case, leave me at once. I have forbidden you to speak to me of her."

"Sire, she knows nothing."

"So much the worse for her. Let her name never be pronounced before me again."

This sentence was given in a tone which admitted of no reply. Frederick certainly suffered at the recollection of Porporina. There was in the depths of his heart and conscience a sore point which shrunk from that subject, as we shrink from the pressure of a finger where a thorn has entered the flesh. To get rid of this painful sensation, he determined irrevocably to forget the cause, and found no difficulty in so doing. Eight days had not passed when, thanks to his royal robust temperament, and to the servile submission of all who approached him, he no longer remembered that Consuelo ever existed. In the meantime the unfortunate girl was confined at Spandau. The opera season was at an end, and her instrument had been taken from her. The king had paid her this *attention* on the evening when she had been applauded to his face, with the desire of giving him pleasure. Prince Henri was under arrest for an indefinite period; the Abbess of Quedlimberg was seriously ill. The king had had the cruelty to make her believe that Trenck had been recaptured and sent back to his dungeon; Trismegistus and Saint Germain had disappeared in reality, and the *sweeper* had ceased to haunt the palace. The forebodings of her apparition appeared to have been confirmed:

the youngest of the king's brothers died exhausted by premature infirmities.

Deprived of her instrument, poor Consuelo aroused herself with all her courage to continue her song, and the composition of music, during the evening. She succeeded, and was not long in perceiving that her voice, and the exquisite justness of her ear, greatly improved in their dry and difficult exercise. The fear of falling into error rendered her much more careful, and she listened with redoubled attention, thus involving a labour of memory and excessive observation. Her manner of singing became less conventional, more earnest, more perfect. While her compositions took a more simple character, and she composed in her prison airs of an extraordinary beauty and of a sublime sadness, she none the less felt the injury to her health and peace of mind which the loss of her instrument caused. Experiencing the necessity of incessant occupation, and being unable to rest from the exciting and stormy labour of composition and execution in the more tranquil labour of reading and study, she felt fever creeping into her veins, grief taking possession of all her thoughts. Her active character, joyous and full of affection and trust, was not made for isolation and the absence of sympathy. She would, perhaps, have sunk under a few weeks of this cruel *régime*, had not Providence sent her a friend, where certainly she least expected to find one.

Beneath the cell occupied by our recluse, a large smoke-begrimed room, the gloomy depths of which received no other light than that from the fire blazing in the chimney constantly filled with cauldrons boiling and growling in all varieties of tones, was inhabited through the day by the family of Schwartz, during their culinary operations. While the wife mathematically concocted the greatest possible number of dinners with the smallest imaginable quantity of ingredients and provisions, the husband, seated before a table blackened with ink and oil, artistically composed, by the light of a lamp constantly burning in this gloomy sanctuary, the most formidable accounts filled with the most fabulous details. The meagre dinners were for the large number of prisoners whom the officious jailer had managed to put upon his list as boarders; the accounts were to be presented to their bankers or relations, without being always submitted to the inspection of those who had consumed this sumptuous

dietary. While this speculative couple gave themselves up ardently to their work, two more peaceable personages, ensconced beneath the chimney-piece, lived there in silence, perfect strangers to the sweets and profits of the operations carried on before them. The first was a large lean cat, carroty and mangy, and its existence was consumed in licking its paws and rolling in the cinders. The second was a young man, or rather a child, still more ugly of his kind, whose silent and contemplative life was divided between the reading of an old book, more greasy than his mother's pots, and eternal reveries which resembled the beatitudes of idiotism rather than the meditations of a reflective being. The cat had been baptised by the child with the name of Beelzebub, in contrast, doubtless, to that which the child had himself received from Monsieur and Madame Schwartz, his father and mother—the sweet and pious name of Gottlieb.

Gottlieb, who was destined to the ecclesiastical profession, had carried on his studies and made rapid progress in the Protestant ritual up to the age of fifteen. But for the last four years he had lived inert and suffering, cowering by the fire, without energy for exertion, scarcely desiring to see the sun, and utterly unable to continue his education. The sudden and rapid growth of the boy had reduced him to this state of languor and indolence. His long, thin legs could scarcely support his extreme height and half-dislocated frame. His arms were so feeble and his hands so awkward, that he could not touch anything without breaking it. Thus his avaricious mother had forbidden him to meddle with anything, and he was but too well inclined to obey her on this point. His swollen and beardless face, terminated by a high bald forehead, bore no bad resemblance to a ripe pear. His features were as irregular as the proportions of his body. His eyes appeared completely bewildered, so oblique and so wavering were their glances. His thick mouth wore a vacant smile; his nose was shapeless, his complexion wan, his ears flat, and placed considerably too low; thin bristly hair crowned this insipid face, which was more like an ill-peeled turnip than the countenance of a Christian; at least such was the poetical comparison of his mother.

In spite of the disgrace which nature had heaped on this poor being, in spite of the shame and grief Madame Schwartz experienced as she looked at him, Gottlieb, the only son,

resigned and an inoffensive invalid, was nevertheless the sole love and pride of the authors of his being. They had flattered themselves, when he was not as yet so very ugly, that he might become a good-looking boy. They had rejoiced in his studious childhood, and the brilliant promise of his future. In spite of the precarious condition to which they saw him reduced, they hoped that he would acquire strength, intelligence, and beauty when he should have finished his interminable growth. Besides, it is needless to say, that maternal love reconciles itself to everything, and is contented with a little. Madame Schwartz, while treating him roughly, affecting to rally him, adored her ugly Gottlieb, and had she not constantly seen him planted like a pillar of salt (to use her own expression) in the corner of the chimney, she would no longer have had the courage to dilute her sauces, and swell her accounts. His father, Schwartz, who, like many other men, carried more self-love than tenderness into the paternal feeling, persisted in fleecing and robbing his prisoners, in the hope that Gottlieb would, some day, become a minister and a famous preacher; this being his fixed idea, inasmuch as, before his illness, the child had had the gift of expressing himself with facility. But it was full four years since he had uttered a word of sense; and if he chanced to string two or three phrases together, it was only to his cat, Beelzebub, that he deigned to address them. In short, Gottlieb was declared by the physicians to be an idiot, and his parents alone believed in the possibility of his recovery.

One day, however, Gottlieb, suddenly dropping his apathy, manifested to his parents the desire to learn some trade, that he might render his sad years of languor less useless and wearisome. They acceded to this innocent fancy, though it scarcely befitted the dignity of a future member of the Reformed Church to labour with his hands. But Gottlieb's mind appeared so determined to take repose, that they were obliged to let him study the art of shoe-making at the shop of a neighbour. His father would have wished him to choose a more elegant profession; but it was in vain that they passed the various trades in review before him, he obstinately adhered to the labour of St. Crispin, and even declared that he felt a special call from Providence to embrace that occupation. As this desire became a fixed idea with him, and as

the fear of being opposed in it threw him into a profound melancholy, he was allowed to pass one month in the workshop of a master, after which he returned one fine morning, supplied with all necessary tools and materials, and reinstated himself beneath his dear chimney, declaring that he knew enough, and that he had no more need of lessons. This was not likely; but his parents, hoping that the trial had disgusted him, and that he was about to return to his theological studies, received him without reproaches or raillery. Now began in the life of Gottlieb a new era, which was completely filled and charmed by the imaginary construction of a pair of shoes. Three or four hours a day he would take his last and his awl, and work at a shoe never destined to be worn since it was never completed. Every day, re-cut, stretched, fresh beaten, it took all possible shapes except that of a shoe, which did not prevent the gentle artisan from following his work with a pleasure, an attention, a gravity, a patience and a self-content, proof against all observation and attack. The Schwartzes were at first alarmed at this monomania, then grew accustomed to it as to all else, and the interminable shoe, alternating in the hands of Gottlieb with his volumes of prayers and sermons, was no longer looked upon save as one infirmity more in his singular life. They required nothing of him but from time to time to accompany his father through the galleries and courts that he might take the air. But these promenades greatly vexed M. Schwartz, inasmuch as the children of the other jailers and *employés* of the citadel never ceased to run after Gottlieb, mimicking his careless and ungraceful walk, and crying in all keys "Shoes! shoes! shoemaker, make us some shoes!" Gottlieb never took these hootings amiss; he smiled at this mischievous swarm with an imperturbable serenity, and even stopped to answer, "Shoes! certainly, with all my heart; come to my house, and I will take your measure; who wants shoes?" But M. Schwartz would drag him away, that he might not compromise himself with the *canaille*, and the shoemaker appeared neither angry nor annoyed at being thus snatched from the eagerness of his customers.

In the early days of her captivity, Consuelo had been humbly requested by M. Schwartz to enter into conversation with Gottlieb, to try and re-awake in him the remembrance and taste for that eloquence with which had appeared *to*

be endowed in his childhood. While admitting the apathetic and afflicted condition of his heir, M. Schwartz, faithful to the law of nature, so well expressed by La Fontaine—

Nos petits sont mignons,
Beaux, bien faits, et jolis surtous leurs compagnons.

had not very faithfully described the charms of poor Gottlieb; but for this, Consuelo might not perhaps have refused to see him; as it was, she declined receiving in her cell a young man of nineteen, who was represented to her as follows:—"A great big fellow, five feet eight inches high, who would make the mouths of all the recruiters in the country water, if, unfortunately for his health, and fortunately for his independence, a slight weakness in his arms and legs had not rendered him unfit for the profession of arms." The captive thought that the society of a boy of such an age and appearance was but little suitable to her situation, and she therefore distinctly refused to receive him: a piece of discourtesy which the Mother Schwartz made her daily expiate by adding a pint of water to her soup.

In order to reach the esplanade, where she had permission to take the air every day, Consuelo was obliged to descend into the nauseous residence of the Schwartz family. It happened, then, that in crossing their kitchen, one door of which opened upon the esplanade, Consuelo at last caught sight of and discovered Gottlieb. This child's face upon the frame of an ill-made giant, struck her first of all with disgust, and then with pity. She spoke to him, questioned him kindly, and tried to make him speak. But she found his mind paralysed, either through illness, or excessive timidity; for he did not attempt to follow her upon the ramparts, unless pushed there by force by his parents, and only replied to her questions in monosyllables. She thus feared, by taking notice of him, to aggravate the langour she supposed him to be enduring, and abstained from speaking to him or even looking at him, after having declared to his father that she did not discover in him the least disposition for the oratorical art.

Consuelo had been searched anew by Madame Schwartz, on the evening after she had seen her companion, Porporino, and the public of Berlin, for the last time; but she had succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the female Cerberus. It was late in the night, the kitchen was dark, and Madame Schwartz was in an ill-humour at being waked out of her first

slumber. While Gottlieb was asleep in a room, or rather a niche, opening upon the culinary workshop, and M. Schwartz ascended to open beforehand the double iron-door of the cell, Consuelo drew near to the smouldering fire, and, feigning to caress Beelzebub, sought some means of saving her pecuniary resources from the talons of the searcher, that she might no longer be at her absolute discretion. As Madame Schwartz was lighting her lamp, and putting on her spectacles, Consuelo remarked, in the depth of the chimney, near the place where Gottlieb was usually seated, an opening in the wall, about the height of her arm, in which mysterious recess was the book of sermons and the eternal shoe of the poor idiot. It was his bookcase and workshop. This hole, blackened by smoke and soot, contained all the wealth, all the delight of Gottlieb. By a rapid and skilful movement, Consuelo disposed of her purse in it, and then allowed herself to be patiently examined by the old hag, who teased her for some time, passing her greasy and crooked fingers over all the folds of her dress, surprised and enraged at finding nothing. The *sang froid* of Consuelo, who, after all, did not greatly care for the success of her little enterprise, succeeded in persuading the jailer that she had, indeed, brought back nothing; and when the examination was finished, she was able to regain possession of her purse, and carried it in her hand beneath her pelisse till she arrived at her own room. There she endeavoured to hide it, knowing quite well that, during her daily walk, they carefully examined her cell, but she could find no better means of concealment than that of carrying her little fortune constantly about with her, sewn into a girdle, Madame Schwartz having no right to search her, unless she had been out of the citadel.

In the meantime, the first sum which Madame Schwartz had seized upon the prisoner on the day of her arrival, had been for some time exhausted, thanks to the ingenious summing up of M. Schwartz's accounts. When he had made a fresh outlay, small enough in reality, and had prepared a new account, sufficiently heavy, the said Schwartz had repaired, without saying a word, to Berlin, and had presented his bill to this faithful banker. Le Porporino, warned by Consuelo, had refused to discharge the bill until it should have been approved by the consumer, and had sent the creditor to his friend, whom he knew to be furnished by himself with a

fresh supply of money. Schwartz returned, pale and in despair, crying out that he was ruined, and looking upon himself as robbed, notwithstanding that the first hundred ducats seized upon the prisoner would have paid him four times over for the outlay she had caused during the last two months. Madame Schwartz endured this pretended loss with the philosophy of a stronger head and a more persevering mind.

"Beyond doubt, we are pillaged as though we were on the highway," said she; "but did you ever reckon on this prisoner for your livelihood? I warned you what would happen. An actress! she can have no savings. An actor for her banker! what honesty can be expected from him? Come; we have incurred a loss of two hundred ducats, but we will make up for it upon our other customers who are more sure. Let it only teach you not to offer your services inconsiderately to every new comer. I am not sorry, Schwartz, that you should receive this little lesson. Now I am going to give myself the pleasure of putting my lady upon dry bread, aye, upon mouldy bread, this madame, who had not even the consideration to put a *frédéric d'or* in her pocket when she returned, to pay the trouble of searching her; and who appears to look upon Gottlieb as a helpless simpleton, because he has not paid court to her, the trumpery creature—psha!"

As she thus grumbled, shrugging her shoulders, Madame Schwartz returned to her occupations, and finding herself beneath the chimney-piece, close to Gottlieb, said to him, while skimming her pots—

"What do you say to this, you young rogue?"

She spoke this for the sake of speaking, for she knew quite well that Gottlieb heard no more than his cat Beelzebub.

"My shoe is getting on, mother," replied he, with a bewildered smile; "I shall soon begin a new pair."

"Indeed!" said the old woman, shaking her head with an air of pity, "at that rate, you will make a pair of shoes every day. Go on, my boy; it will bring you in a fine revenue! Good heavens!" she added, re-covering her pots, and in a tone of plaintive resignation, as if maternal indulgence had softened her petrified heart.

Consuelo finding that day that her dinner failed to appear, suspected what had taken place, though she found it difficult to believe that a hundred ducats could have been absorbed

in so short a time, and to furnish so humble a table. She had determined beforehand what plan to pursue with regard to the Schwartzes. Not having as yet received a single farthing from the King of Prussia, and fearing to rely upon the promises of the past for her salary (Voltaire departed, paid in the same coin), she well knew that the little money she had earned by charming the ears of persons less avaricious, but also less rich, would not go far, in case her captivity should be prolonged, and M. Schwartz did not moderate his pretensions; and desiring to compel him to abate his charges, for two or three days she contented herself with the bread and water he brought her, pretending not to notice the change in her *régime*. Among other things, the stove also began to be neglected, and Consuelo endured the cold without complaint. Fortunately, it was no longer intense, being now the month of April, a season less advanced in Prussia than with us, but in which the temperature begins to relent.

Before entering into an explanation with her avaricious tyrant, she determined to ensure the safety of her funds, for she could not hope to escape an arbitrary examination as soon as she had confessed her resources. Necessity gives no foresight if it cannot render us ingenious. Consuelo had no instrument with which to make a hole in the wood or raise a stone. But on the morrow, while examining every nook in her cell, with that minute patience of which prisoners alone are capable, she discovered a brick which did not appear so well united to the wall as the rest. By dint of scratching round it with her nails, she succeeded in removing the mortar, and discovered that it was not made of cement like the rest, but of a brittle material, which she perceived to be the dried crumb of bread. She succeeded in detaching the brick, and found behind it a small space, certainly contrived by some former prisoner, between this moveable brick and the bricks which formed the thickness of the wall. She doubted this no longer, when upon searching this secret place, her fingers came in contact with several objects: veritable treasures for a prisoner; a packet of pencils, a knife, a flint, tinder, and several rolls of that small winding wax-light, which we call *rats de cave*. These different objects were in perfect preservation, the wall being very dry, and moreover they might have been placed there but a few days before she

took possession of her cell. She added to them her purse, and little filigree crucifix, upon which M. Schwartz had several times cast a covetous eye, saying that the bauble would greatly please Gottlieb. She then replaced the brick, cementing it with the crumb of the bread left from her breakfast, which she darkened by rubbing it on the floor, that she might give it the same colour as the rest. Assured for some time as to the means of existence, and employment for her evenings, she resolutely awaited the domiciliary visit of M. Schwartz, feeling as proud and joyous as though she had discovered a new world.

In the meantime, Schwartz soon grew weary of finding no opening for his speculative propensities. If he must, as he said, be content with small profits, better a little than nothing, and he was, therefore, the first to break silence by asking his prisoner No. Three if she had any commands to give him for the future. Upon this, Consuelo determined to declare to him, not that she had no money, but that she should receive some every week by means which it would be impossible to discover.

"If, however, you should detect these means," said she, "the result will be to prevent any further outlay on my part; it is for you to choose between the rigorous carrying out of your orders and your honest profits."

After many unsuccessful efforts and examinations, which lasted for some days, her clothes, palliasse, and furniture being searched, Schwartz began to think that Consuelo received from some superior functionary of the prison the means of correspondence without. Corruption prevailed everywhere throughout the prison hierarchy, and the subalterns found their account in not seeking to control their more powerful comrades.

"Let us take what God sends us," said Schwartz, sighing; and he resigned himself to the unlucky settlement of his accounts with Porporina. She did not oppose him as to the appropriation of her first funds; but she regulated the future so as not to pay more than double the value of each article: a proceeding which did not prevent him from accepting his salary, and from earning it in his accustomed manner.

CHAPTER XV.

To those who are addicted to the perusal of prison histories, the fact of this secret place escaping the eager examination of jailers interested in its discovery, will not appear miraculous. Consuelo's little secret was not discovered, and when she sought her treasures upon her return from her walk, she found them intact. Her first care was to place her mattress before the window as soon as night had set in, to light her little taper, and begin writing. We will let her speak for herself; for we are in possession of this manuscript, which remained for some time after her death in the hands of the Prebendary ——. We translate it from the Italian.

"THE JOURNAL OF CONSUELO,

"CALLED PORPORINA,

"*Prisoner at Spandau, April*, 175-.

"—— 2. I have never written anything but music, and though I can speak several languages with facility, I know not if I can express myself correctly in any. It has never occurred to me to give utterance to what occupied my heart and life in any other language than that of the divine art I profess. Words, phrases, appeared to me so cold in comparison to singing. I allude to the letters, or rather the notes I have hurriedly traced, almost without knowing how, in the three or four most important circumstances of my life. This, then, is the first time in my life, that I have experienced the desire of putting into words, what I have felt since my arrival here. The very attempt is even a great pleasure. Illustrious and venerable Porporina, dear and amiable Haydn, excellent and respected Canon ——, you, my only friends, and it may be you also, noble and unfortunate Baron de Trenck, it is of you all that I think as I write; it is for you that I relate my dreams and trials. It seems to me as if I were speaking to you; as if I were with you, and as if in my sad solitude I escaped the annihilation of death by initiating you into the secret of my life. It may be that I shall die here of weariness and misery, though up to the

present time neither my health nor my courage has sensibly altered. But I know not what ills the future may have in store for me, and if I fall before them, at least some trace of me, some record of my agony, will remain in your hands; it will be the inheritance of some prisoner who shall succeed me in this cell, and who will discover the secret place in the wall, where I have myself found the paper and pencil with which I am writing. Oh! now do I thank my mother, who knew not how to write herself, for having me taught to write. Yes, writing is a great comfort to a prisoner! My sad songs cannot pierce these thick walls, cannot reach you; but my writing will one day meet your eyes, and who knows but that ere long I may find some means of sending it to you? I have always relied upon Providence.

"—— 3. I must write concisely, and without giving way to long reflections. This small stock of paper, delicate as silk, cannot last for ever, and perhaps my captivity may do so. I will say a few words to you every night before I go to sleep. I must also examine my taper. I cannot write during the day, lest I should be surprised in the act. I will not tell you the cause of my being sent here, for I know it not myself; and by trying to discover the reason with you, I might perhaps compromise persons who, notwithstanding, have confided nothing to me. Neither will I complain of the authors of my misfortune. I feel as though if I allowed myself to give way to reproaches and anger, I should lose the strength which supports me. I will leave no thought here but of those I love, of those I have loved.

"I sing for two hours every evening, and I think I am making progress. To what purpose? The roof of my dungeon replies to me; it does not hear me. But God hears me, and when I have composed a hymn, which I sing to him with all the fervour of my soul, I experience a celestial calm, and fall asleep, almost happy. It seems as if an answer reached me from heaven, and a mysterious voice sings to me in my sleep another hymn more beautiful than mine, which I try on the morrow to recollect and sing in my turn. Now that I have pencils, as I have still some ruled paper left, I intend to write down my compositions. The day may perhaps come, when you, my dear friends, will try them, and I shall not have ceased to live altogether.

"—— 4. This morning a robin came into my room, and

remained there more than a quarter of an hour. For the last fifteen days I have been inviting him to do me this honour, and to-day he has at length decided on accepting my invitation. He lives in an old ivy bush which reaches my window, and which my jailers spare, because it shades their door, situated some feet beneath. The pretty little bird looked at me for some time with a curious and mistrustful air. Attracted by the bread which I had rolled up in the form of small worms, and which I twisted about in my fingers to tempt him by the appearance of living prey, he came lightly, and as if blown by a gust of wind, close to the bars of my prison, but as soon as he perceived the deception, he flew away with an air of reproach, and gave utterance to a low trill resembling a complaint.

"—— 5. Another event. Here is a note I received this morning, in a handwriting scarcely legible, upon a piece of dirty paper:—'My sister, since the spirit visits you, you are a saint, I am sure. I am your friend and servant. Dispose of me, and command what you will of your brother.'

"Who then is this friend, this unlooked-for brother? It is impossible to guess. I found the note upon my window-sill this morning, when I opened it to say good-bye to the robin; so well does he know me, the dear little thing! and he begins to love me. He scarcely ever approaches the kitchen of the Schwartz family, whose window exhales an odour of warm fat which reaches over here, and is not the least unpleasant thing in my habitation. But I no longer desire to change it, since my little bird has adopted it. He has too much good taste to become intimate with the jailer, his wicked wife, and ugly offspring. It is to me decidedly that he accords his confidence and friendship. He came to my room again to-day. He made a hearty breakfast, and when I walked at noon upon the esplanade, he descended from his ivy, and came and flew round me. He sounded his little trill, as though to entice and attract my attention. The poor ugly Gottlieb was at the threshold of his door, and looked at me, grinning with his wild eyes. This creature is always accompanied by a frightful sandy-coloured cat, which watches my robin with an eye still more horrible than that of its master. It makes me tremble. I hate this cat, almost as much as I hate Madame Schwartz, the searcher.

"—— 6. Another note this morning! This is becoming

strange. The same sharp, crooked, dirty scrawl; the same coarse sugar paper. My Lindor is no hidalgo, but he is tender and enthusiastic. 'Dear sister! elect soul of God! you distrust me. You will not speak to me. Have you nothing to command me? Is there no way in which I can serve you? My life is yours. Command your brother then.' I looked at the sentinel. He is a stupid clod of a soldier, who knits his stockings as he walks up and down with his musket on his shoulder. He looked at me also, and seemed more disposed to send me a ball than a love letter. On whatever side I turn my eyes, I see nothing but immense gray wall, bristling with nettles, surrounded by ditches, which are themselves surrounded by other fortifications, of which I know neither the name nor the use, but which deprive me of the view of the water; and upon the summit of this outwork is another sentinel, the top of whose gun and hat I can just see, and whose harsh cry I hear challenging every boat which passes the citadel: 'Pass on!' If I could but see these boats, and the running water, and a piece of the landscape! But I hear only the noise of the oars, or occasionally the song of a fisherman in the distance, when the wind sets this way, or the murmuring of the two rivers which meet at some distance from the prison. But whence comes these mysterious notes, and this devotion of which I know not how to avail myself?

"——7. As, during my walk on the ramparts, I was looking carefully around me, I perceived a small narrow opening in the side of the tower which I inhabit, about ten feet above my window, and almost concealed by the top branches of the ivy which reaches it. So little light can scarcely mark the abode of a living being, I thought, trembling; yet desiring to assure myself on this point, I tried to attract Gottlieb to the rampart by flattering his monomania, or rather his unhappy passion for making shoes. I asked him if he could make me a pair of slippers, and for the first time he approached me of his own free will, replying with a total absence of embarrassment. But his manner of speaking is as singular as his face, and I begin to think he is not an idiot but a madman.

"'Make shoes for thee?' he said to me; (for he uses the third person singular to every one) 'no, I dare not. It is written: I am not worthy to unfasten the latchet of his shoes.'

"I saw his mother a few steps from the door, ready to take part in the conversation. Having no time to consider the motive of his humility or veneration, I hastened to ask him if the floor above me were inhabited, though I had no hope of obtaining a reasonable reply.

"'It is not inhabited,' answered Gottlieb with perfect readiness, 'neither can it be, for there is but one staircase which conducts to the platform.'

"'And is the platform isolated? Does it communicate with nothing.'

"'Why do you ask me what you know?'

"'I do not know, neither do I care much to know. I only ask to make you speak, Gottlieb, and to see if you are as clever as they say.'

"'I am very clever,' replied poor Gottlieb, in a sad, grave tone, offering a strange contrast to the comicalities of his words.

"'In that case you can explain to me,' I returned (for the moments were precious), 'how this court is constructed.'

"'Ask the robin,' he rejoined, with a singular smile; 'he knows everything; he can go everywhere, but he never visits any but his equals. That is why he enters thy chamber.'

"'Thanks, Gottlieb! you take me for a bird.'

"'The robin is not a bird.'

"'What is it then?'

"'It is an angel, thou know'st it.'

"'In that case, I am one also?'

"'Thou hast said it.'

"'You are gallant, Gottlieb.'

"'Gallant!' said Gottlieb, looking at me with an air of profound astonishment; 'what is the meaning of gallant?'

"'You do not know the word?'

"'No.'

"'How do you know that the robin enters my room?'

"'I have seen him; and, besides, he has told me so.'

"'He speaks to you, then?'

"'Sometimes,' said Gottlieb, sighing; 'very rarely! But yesterday he told me: No! I will never enter your infernal kitchen. Angels can have no communications with wicked spirits.'

"'Are you a wicked spirit, Gottlieb?'

"'Oh! no, not I; but——' Here Gottlieb placed a finger on his thick lip with a mysterious air.

"'But what?'

"He made me no reply, but stealthily pointed towards his cat, as though he feared it should see him.

"'That is why you call it by such a villainous name: Beelzebub, I think?'

"'Hush!' returned Gottlieb, 'that is his name, and he knows it. He has borne it ever since the world existed; but he will not bear it for ever.'

"'Certainly not when he dies!'

"'He will never die! He cannot die, and this grieves him, because he does not know that a day will come on which he will receive pardon.'

"Here we were interrupted by the approach of Madame Schwartz, who was astonished to see Gottlieb conversing at his ease with me, at the same time she was delighted, and asked me if I were pleased with him.

"'Very much pleased, I assure you. Gottlieb is very interesting, and henceforth I shall take pleasure in making him talk.'

"'Ah! mademoiselle, you will render us a great service, for the poor child has no one to talk with, and with us it is as though he had taken a resolution not to open his mouth. Are you not eccentric, my poor Gottlieb, and obstinate? since here you are talking well enough with mademoiselle, whom you do not know, while with your parents——'

"Gottlieb turned upon his heels and disappeared in the kitchen, without appearing to have heard even the sound of his mother's voice.

"'This is what he always does,' cried Madame Schwartz; 'when his father or I address him, we would swear twenty-nine times out of thirty that he had become deaf. But, after all, what has he been saying to you, mademoiselle? What can he have been speaking about so long?'

"'I confess that I did not clearly understand him,' I replied; 'I must first learn what his ideas refer to. Allow me to make him talk from time to time without interrupting him, and when I have done this, I will tell you what is passing in his mind.'

"'But, mademoiselle, his mind is not disordered.'

"'I think not,' I rejoined, and may God forgive me the

falsehood! My first impulse was to spare this poor woman, who, malicious witch as she is, is still a mother, and fortunate enough not to see the folly of her son. This is very singular. The truth must be, that Gottlieb, who exposed his eccentricities to me so artlessly, has the mania of silence towards his parents. As I reflected on these things, I imagined that I might, perhaps, draw some information from this unfortunate creature as to the other inhabitants of my prison, and that I might, by chance, discover through his replies, the author of my anonymous billets. There is poetry in the disordered mind of this poor boy! The little bird, an angel; the cat, a wicked spirit, which will hereafter be pardoned! What is all this? There is in these German brains, even among the most disordered, a luxury of imagination which I admire.

"—— 8. A third note upon my window. 'Dear sister, the platform is isolated; but the staircase which leads to it communicates with another portion of the building, at the end of which is the apartment of a lady, a prisoner like yourself. Her name is a mystery, but the robin will tell it you, if you ask him. For the rest, this is what you desired to know of poor Gottlieb, and what he could not inform you.'

"Who is this friend, then, who sees, who knows, who hears, all I say and do? I am bewildered. He is invisible, then. All this appears so marvellous that I am seriously interested in it. It seems to me as if I were living as in my childhood, in the midst of fairy tales, and that my robin would suddenly speak to me.

"—— 9. What have I learned? or rather what do I think I have learned? for as yet I know nothing, but my imagination is greatly excited.

"First of all, I have discovered the author of the mysterious billets. He is the last person I should have thought of. But it is no longer that which astonishes me. No matter, I will tell you all the events of this day.

"Early in the morning I opened my little window, composed of a single pane of glass, of a good size, and tolerably clear, thanks to the care with which I clean it, that I may lose none of the little light which reaches me, and which my abominable ivy leaves dispute with me.

"The sun rose clear, and my cell was almost the colour of a rose, like my chamber of other days in the Corte Minelle, when the sun of Venice—but I must not think of that sun;

never again will it rise on my head! May ye, oh, my friends! salute for me smiling Italy, and its intense skies, its *firmamento lucido*, which doubtless, I shall never see again.

"I asked to go out, and permission was given me, though it was at an earlier hour than usual. To call this going out! A platform of thirty feet long, surrounded by a marsh and enclosed between high walls! Yet this place is not without beauty, at least I think so now that I have contemplated it under all aspects. At night its very sadness gives it beauty. I am sure that there are many people here as innocent as myself, though less fortunately placed, in dungeons whence they are never allowed to issue, and where daylight never penetrates; where the moon even, the friend of desolate hearts, can never reach. Ah! I was wrong to murmer. Oh! if I had power upon earth I would make people happy.

"Gottlieb came hobbling towards me, smiling as much as his petrified mouth can smile. They did not interfere with him, but left him alone with me, and suddenly and miraculously he began speaking almost like a reasonable being.

"'I have not written to you to-night,' he said, 'and you found no note at your window. This is because I did not see you yesterday, and you had given me no commands.'

"'What do you say, Gottlieb! Is it you who have written to me?'

"'And who else would have done so? Did you not guess it was I? But I shall write to you no longer now that you will speak to me. I do not wish to teaze, but to serve you.'

"'Kind Gottlieb! you pity me, then? You take an interest in me?'

"'Yes, ever since I have recognised you for a spirit of light!'

"'I am nothing more than yourself, Gottlieb; you are deceived.'

"'I am not deceived. Have I not heard you sing?'

"'You love music?'

"'I love yours; it is like God and my own heart.'

"'Your heart is pious, your soul pure, I see, Gottlieb.'

"'I endeavour to keep them so. The angels assist me, and I shall conquer the spirit of darkness which haunts my poor body, but which cannot get possession of my soul.'

"By degrees Gottlieb began speaking with enthusiasm, but

without ceasing to be noble and true to his poetic symbols. In short, what shall I say? This idiot, this madman, grew truly eloquent as he spoke of the goodness of God, of human misery, of the future justice, of an over-ruling Providence, of evangelical virtues, of the duties of a true belief, even of the arts of music and poetry. I have not yet been able to make out from what religion he has divined his ideas, and this fervent exaltation; for he seems to be neither a Catholic nor a Protestant, and while repeatedly telling me that he believed in the only true religion, he taught me nothing, if it were not, that unknown to his parents, he belongs to some particular sect: I am too ignorant to guess what sect. I shall study by degrees the mystery of this soul so strangely constituted, so beautiful, so singularly diseased and afflicted; for, in one word, this poor Gottlieb is mad, as Zdenko was in his poetry, as Albert also was in his sublime virtue! The insanity of Gottlieb re-appeared, when, after having spoken for some time with great warmth, his enthusiasm suddenly became stronger than himself, and he began talking incoherently in a childish manner, which greatly pained me, concerning the red-breast and the demon cat, and his mother, who has entered into an alliance with the cat, and the evil spirit which dwells in it, and lastly his father, who had been changed into a stone by a look from the poor cat Beelzebub. I succeeded in calming him by drawing him away from his gloomy fancies, and questioning him respecting the other prisoners. I had no longer any personal interest in these details, since the billets, instead of being thrown upon my window-sill from the top of the tower, as I had supposed, were hoisted from below by Gottlieb, before daybreak, by means of some engine, doubtless very simple. But Gottlieb, singularly obedient and docile to my wishes, had already learned what on the preceding evening I had appeared desirous to know. He told me that the lady prisoner who inhabits the building to the rear of mine was young and handsome, and that he had seen her. I did not pay much attention to his words, till suddenly he told me her name, which made me tremble. This captive is called Amelia.

"Amelia! What a sea of anxieties, what a world of remembrances, this name awakens in me! I have known two Amelias, both of whom brought ruin upon my life by their confidences. Is this one the Princess of Prussia, or the

young Baroness de Rudolstadt? Doubtless, neither the one nor the other. Gottlieb, who has no curiosity on his own account, and who does not seem capable of taking any step, or asking a single question, if I do not push him on towards it like an automaton, had nothing more to tell me than this name Amelia. He had seen the captive, but he saw her in his own way, that is to say, through a cloud. She must be young and handsome, since Madame Schwartz told him so, but Gottlieb confessed that he knew nothing about it. He only felt, as he saw her at her window, that she was not a good spirit, an angel. Her family name was made a mystery. She is rich, and keeps an account with the Schwartzes. But she is secretly confined, like myself. She never goes out. She is often ill. This is all I could learn. Gottlieb has but to attend to the gossip of his parents to learn more than this, for they use no ceremony before him. He has promised me to listen, and to tell me how long Amelia has been there. As for her other name, it appears that the Schwartzes are ignorant of it. Could they be so if she were the Abbess de Quedlimberg? Can the king have put his own sister into prison? Princesses are sent hither like others, nay, oftener than others. The young Baroness de Rudolstadt! why should she be here? By what right can Frederick have deprived her of her liberty? Come! it is the curiosity of a recluse which torments me, and my conjectures upon a simple name arise from an idle and unhealthy imagination. No matter: I shall have a load upon my breast until I know who this companion in misfortune is, bearing a name so painful to me.

"The 1st of May.—Several days have passed without my being able to write. Various events have filled this interval; I hasten to relate them to you.

"First of all, I have been ill. From time to time, since I have been here, I have felt a feverish action in my brain, resembling in some degree what I suffered so much from at the Château des Géants, after having been in the cavern in search of Albert. I have painful fits of wakefulness, alternating with dreams, during which I know not whether I wake or sleep; and at these moments I always fancy I hear that terrible violin playing its old Bohemian airs, its hymns, and war-songs. This does me a great deal of harm, and yet, when the imagination once begins to take possession of me,

I cannot help lending my ear, and receiving with avidity the feeble sounds which a distant breeze seems to waft towards me. Sometimes I fancy these sounds glide upon the water which sleeps around the citadel; sometimes that they descend from the summit of the walls, and at others, that they escape from the window of some dungeon. My head and heart are alike disturbed. And yet, when night comes, instead of distracting my thoughts by writing, I throw myself upon my bed, and force on that half-sleep which brings me my dream, or rather my half dream of music, for there is some reality in it. A violin does certainly sound in the chamber of some prisoner; but what does it play, and in what manner? It is too far off for me to hear other than broken sounds. My diseased mind invents the rest, I have no doubt. It is my lot, henceforth, neither to be able to doubt the death of Albert, nor to accept it as an ascertained misfortune; and this apparently because it is in my nature to hope in spite of all, and never to yield to the bitterness of my fate.

"Three nights ago, when I had at last fallen soundly asleep, I was awakened by a slight noise in my room. I opened my eyes. The night was dark, and I could distinguish nothing. But I distinctly heard some one walking near my bed, though, whoever it was, was walking with great precaution. I thought it was Madame Schwartz who had taken the trouble to come and see how I slept, and I therefore addressed her; but the only reply I got was a deep sigh, and the person departed on tiptoe; I heard my door closed and locked; and as I was very much exhausted, I fell asleep again without paying much attention to the circumstance. On the morrow my memory was so confused and indistinct, that I did not feel sure but that it was a dream. In the evening I had a more violent attack of fever than any I had yet experienced, but I prefer this greatly to my restless watchings and unconnected dreams. I slept soundly, and dreamed much, but I heard nothing of the lugubrious violin, and each time I woke, I felt the advantage of sleep over wakefulness. In one of these intervals I heard the strong and even respiration of some person asleep not far from me. I even fancied that I could distinguish some one in my arm-chair. I was not at all alarmed. Madame Schwartz had come to me at midnight with some ptisan, and I thought she might still be with me. I waited for some time, unwilling

to wake her, till I thought I observed her moving; I then thanked her for her care, and inquired what hour it was. At this the person withdrew, and I heard something like a stifled sigh, so heart-breaking, so terrible, that the perspiration stands on my brow as I recall it. I know not why it made such an impression upon me; it appeared as though some one thought me very ill, perhaps dying, and felt pity for me; but I did not feel ill enough to believe myself in danger, and, moreover, it was a matter of indifference to me to die so gentle a death, with so little suffering, and in the midst of a life so little to be regretted. As soon as Madame Schwartz came into my room, which was about seven o'clock in the morning, as I had not slept subsequently, and had passed the last hours of the night in a state of perfect self-possession, my recollection of this strange visit was very distinct, I begged my jailer to explain it, but she shook her head, saying, that she knew not what I meant; that she had not returned since midnight, and that, as she kept the keys of all the cells confided to her charge under her pillow while she slept, she was sure I had dreamed or seen some vision. Yet I was so far from having been delirious, that I felt well enough towards noon to desire to take the air. I descended to the esplanade, still accompanied by my robin, who seemed to congratulate me on my restoration to strength. The weather was very agreeable. The heat begins to be felt here, and the breezes bring from the country warm breaths of pure air, and the faint perfume of plants, which rejoice the heart in spite of itself. Gottlieb ran towards me; I found him greatly changed, and much more ugly than usual. Yet there is an expression of angelic goodness, and even of bright intelligence, amidst the chaos of his physiognomy, when it is lighted up. His large eyes were so red and bloodshot, that I asked him if anything were the matter.

"'Yes, indeed,' he replied, 'I have been weeping a great deal.'

"'And what sorrow have you, my poor Gottlieb?'

"'At midnight my mother came down from the cell, saying to my father:—No. Three is very ill this morning. She has a fever, and we must send for the doctor, I should not like her to die upon our hands. My mother thought I was asleep; but I could not go to sleep before I heard what she had to say. I knew that you had a fever, but when I

heard that it was dangerous I could not help crying until sleep overpowered me. In spite of this, I must have wept through the whole night in my sleep, for I woke this morning with burning eyes, and my pillow soaked with tears.'

"The attachment of poor Gottlieb touched me greatly, and I thanked him for it by pressing his large black hand, which smells of leather and rosin. Then the idea occurred to me that Gottlieb might possibly, in his enthusiastic zeal, have paid me this noctural visit. I asked him if he had not risen, and come to listen at my door. He answered me that he had not stirred, and I feel persuaded that this was the case. It may be that the place in which he sleeps is so situated that, in my room, I can hear him breathing and sighing through some fissure in the wall, or, perhaps, by the secret place where I keep my money and journal. Who knows but that this recess communicates, by some secret means, with that in the corner of the chimney, where Gottlieb keeps his treasures, his boot and shoemaker's tools? At least, I have something in common with Gottlieb in this respect, for, like rats or bats, we both have a miserable nest in a hole in the wall where all our riches are concealed in the dark. I was about to risk some questions upon this head, when I observed coming out of Schwartz's apartment, and advancing along the esplanade, a person whom I had not seen here before, and whose appearance caused me a feeling of terror, though I was not yet certain as to his identity.

"'Who is that man?' I asked Gottlieb, in a low voice.

"'There is no good in him,' he replied, in the same tone. 'It is our new adjutant. See how Beelzebub sets up his back as he rubs against his legs! They are well acquainted.'

"'But what is he called?'

"Gottlieb was about to reply, when the adjutant said to him, in a soft voice, and with a benevolent smile, pointing towards the kitchen,

"'Young man, you are wanted within. Your father calls you.'

"This was but a pretext to see me alone; and Gottlieb having withdrawn, I found myself face to face—with whom, think you, friend Beppo? With the graceful and ferocious recruit whom we so unluckily met in the Bœhmer Wald, two years ago—even M. Mayer, himself! I could no longer

fail to recognise him, for though he had grown stouter, he was the same man, with his easy, genteel air, his false look, his perfidious good humour, and his eternal *broum! broum!* as if he were performing a trumpet solo with his mouth. From the military band he had passed to the office of supplying human beings as food for cannon; and thence, in recompense of his loyal and honourable services, had been promoted to the rank of officer of the citadel, or rather military jailer, which, after all, suited him quite as well as the profession of rambling jailer, in which he had acquitted himself with so much grace.

"'Mademoiselle,' said he to me in French, 'I am your humble servant! You have here a nice little platform for walking; air, space, and a fine view! I congratulate you upon it. It seems to me that your imprisonment is rendered easy withal. The weather is magnificent, and there is truly some pleasure in being at Spandau when the sun is so bright; *broum! broum!*'

"These insolent railleries so disgusted me that I made no reply. He was not disconcerted, and continued speaking in Italian.

"'I beg pardon; I spoke, perhaps, in a language you do not understand. I forget that you are an Italian, an Italian singer, are you not, with a superb voice, it is said? Such as you see me, I have a perfect mania for music. Thus I feel disposed to render your existence as agreeable as my duty will allow. Ha! where the deuce have I been so fortunate as to see you before? I know your face quite well, upon my honour.'

"'Doubtless, you have seen me at the theatre at Berlin, where I have been singing this winter.'

"'No! I was in Silesia; I was sub-adjutant at Glatz. Happily, that devil of a Trenck attempted his foolish enterprise while I was on my circuit; I mean while I was on a mission to the frontiers of Saxony; else I should have lost my promotion, and should not have been here, which I like, because of its proximity to Berlin; for it is a sad life, mademoiselle, that of an officer in garrison. You cannot imagine how wearisome it is, when one is so far from a large town, in a dreary country; for me, too, who love music so passionately. But where the deuce have I had the pleasure of meeting you?'

"'I do not remember, monsieur, ever to have had the honour of seeing you before.'

"'I must have seen you at some theatre in Italy, or at Vienna. Have you travelled much? How many theatres have you visited?'

"As I made him no reply, he continued, with his barefaced effrontery—

"'Never mind! I shall remember. What was I saying to you? Ah! you also are weary?'

"'No, monsieur.'

"'But you are not in secret confinement? It is you whom they call La Porporina?'

"'Yes, monsieur.'

"'Indeed! prisoner No. Three. Well, do you desire some amusement, some society?'

"'Not at all, monsieur,' I replied, eagerly, thinking that he was about to propose his own.

"'As you please. It is a pity. There is another prisoner here; well brought up. A charming woman, by my faith, who, I am sure, would be enchanted to make your acquaintance.'

"'May I ask her name, monsieur?'

"'She is called Amelia.'

"'Amelia who?'

"'Amelia —— *Broum! broum!* by my faith, I know no more. You are curious, I see; it is the disease of prisons.'

"I repented having repulsed the overtures of M. Mayer; I was in despair at having renounced the hope of knowing this mysterious Amelia; I felt myself drawn towards her anew by a feeling of pity, as well as by the desire of clearing up my own suspicions. I tried, therefore, to be more amiable with this repulsive Mayer, and he soon offered to introduce me to the prisoner No. Two; it was thus he designated Amelia.

"'If this mitigation of my sentence will not compromise you, monsieur,' I replied, 'and I can be of service to this lady, who they tell me is ill with grief and weariness——'

"'*Broum! broum!* You understand things literally, I see! You are still a child! It is that old fool of a Schwartz who has terrified you with his orders. Orders, indeed! are they not a chimera? Good for the porters and

turnkeys, but for us officers' (and as he said this word, Mayer drew himself up like a man not yet accustomed to so honourable a title), 'we shut our eyes to innocent infractions. The king himself would do so, were he in our place. Stay, when you desire anything, mademoiselle, you have only to address yourself to me, and I promise you shall not be needlessly vexed or oppressed. I am naturally indulgent and humane; God made me so, and I love music. If you will sing to me sometimes of an evening, for example, I will come and listen to you here, and then you can do with me what you please.'

"'I will abuse your kindness as little as possible, M. Mayer.'

"'Mayer!' cried the adjutant, hastily interrupting the *broum! broum!* which was lagging on his black chapped lips. 'Why do you call me Mayer? I am not called Mayer. Where the deuce did you get that name Mayer from?'

"'It was an accident, monsieur l'adjutant,' I replied, 'I crave your pardon. I had a singing-master who was called thus, and I have been thinking of him all the morning.'

"'A singing-master? That could not have been myself. There are many Mayers in Germany. My name is Nanteuil. I am of French origin.'

"'Well, monsieur l'officer, how shall I announce myself to this lady? She does not know me, and may perhaps decline my visit, as just now I refused to make her acquaintance. We grow discourteous when we live alone.'

"'Oh! whoever she may be, this beautiful lady will be charmed to find some one to talk to, I will answer for that Will you write her a line?'

"'But I have nothing with which to write.'

"'Impossible! Have you no money then?'

"'Even if I had money, M. Schwartz is incorruptibl and besides, I know not how to corrupt.'

"'Well, stay, I will myself conduct you to No. Two this evening, provided you will sing me something first.'

"I was terrified at the idea that M. Mayer or M. Nanteuil, as he was pleased to be called now, might perhaps introduce himself into my room, and I was about to refuse, when he made me understand his intentions better, either reading my terror and repugnance in my

face, or disclaiming the intention of honouring me with a visit. 'I will listen to you from the platform which commands the tower you inhabit,' said he. 'The voice ascends, and I shall hear quite well then. I will cause the doors to be opened, and you shall be conducted by a woman. I shall not see you at all.' In fact, it would not do for me to appear to urge you to disobedience in person, though, after all, *broum! broum!* on such an occasion, there would be a very simple way of getting out of the affair. To blow out the brains of prisoner No. Three, and say that she was surprised in a flagrant attempt to escape. Ha! ha! the idea is dreadful, is it not? In prison our ideas should be always merry. Your humble servant, Mademoiselle Porporina, till this evening.'

"I was lost in reflection on this unlooked-for determination of this miserable creature, to oblige me, in spite of myself, to entertain a dread of him. I could not believe that such a debased creature could so love music, as to act thus for the pleasure of hearing me sing. I supposed that the prisoner in question was no other than the Princess of Prussia, and that, by order of the king, they had contrived an interview between us, that they might spy our actions, and surprise the state secrets of which they thought I was the depository. In this belief I dreaded the interview as much as I desired it; for I was absolutely ignorant what degree of truth there might be in this pretended conspiracy, in which they accused me of being an accomplice.

"Nevertheless, looking upon it as my duty to brave all, that I might afford some moral assistance to a companion in misfortune, whoever she might be, I began singing at the appointed hour, for the vain ears of monsieur l'adjutant. I sang badly; my audience gave me no inspiration; I was still under the effects of fever, besides I felt that he was only listening to me as a form; perhaps, indeed, that he was not listening to me at all. When eleven o'clock struck, I was seized with a very childish terror. I imagined that M. Mayer had received a secret order to get rid of me, and that he was going to kill me outright, as he had predicted by way of joke, as soon as I should set foot outside my cell. When my door opened I trembled in every limb. An old woman, very dirty and ugly (much more ugly and dirty even than Madame Schwartz) made me a sign to follow her, and pre-

ceded me up a steep, narrow staircase, cut in the wall. When we were at the top, I found myself upon the platform of the tower, thirty feet above the esplanade, where I was accustomed to walk in the day, and eighty or a hundred feet above the moat, which for some distance surrounds all this portion of the building. The frightful old woman, who guided me, told me to wait for her a moment, and disappeared I knew not where. My uneasiness was banished, and I felt so happy in finding myself in the fresh air, under the light of a magnificent moon, and at a considerable elevation which allowed me at least to contemplate a vast horizon, that the solitude in which I was left gave me no anxiety. The large sheet of still water on which the citadel was reflected in black and innumerable shadows, the fields and trees which I saw vaguely on the banks in the distance, the immensity of the heavens, and even the free flight of the bats in the silent night, how grand and majestic all this seemed to me, after two months passed in contemplating walls, and counting the few stars which passed over the narrow belt of firmament perceptible from my cell! But I had not time to enjoy it long. A noise of footsteps made me turn, and all my terrors were re-aroused when I found myself face to face with M. Mayer.

"'Signora,' he said to me, 'I am in despair at having to tell you that you cannot see the prisoner No. Two, at least, at present. She is a very capricious person, as it seems to me. Yesterday she showed the greatest idea for society; but just now, I proposed yours to her, and this is what she replied; 'The prisoner No. Three, she who sings in the tower, and whom I hear every evening? Oh! I know that voice well, and you have no occasion to tell me her name. I am infinitely obliged to you for the society you would give me; I would rather never see a living being again than endure the sight of that unfortunate creature. She is the cause of all my misfortunes, and may it please heaven to make her expiate them as bitterly as I have myself expiated the imprudent friendship I entertained for her!'

"'This, signora, is the opinion of the said lady as regards you. It remains to be proved whether it is deserved or not; that concerns, as the saying is, the tribunal of your own conscience. As for me, I have nothing to do with it, and I am ready to conduct you back to your cell whenever you please.'

"'Instantly, monsieur,' I replied, extremely mortified at being accused of treachery to a miserable creature like that before me, and feeling in the depths of my heart considerable bitterness against whichever of the two Amelias it was who displayed towards me such injustice and ingratitude.

"'I do not hurry you on this point,' observed the new adjutant. 'You seem to take pleasure in looking at the moon. Look at it, therefore, at your ease. That will cost nothing, and can do no one any harm.'

"I was imprudent enough to avail myself of this condescension for a moment or two. I could not determine to drag myself away so soon from the beautiful spectacle, of which I was about to be deprived perhaps for ever; and in spite of myself, Mayer produced the effect upon me of a servant but too much honoured in waiting my orders. He profited by my contempt, and took courage to commence a conversation.

"'Do you know, signora,' he said to me, 'that you sing excellently well? I never heard anything finer in Italy, where, nevertheless, I frequented the best theatres and saw all the first *artistes*. Where did you come out? How long have you been travelling in different countries? Have you travelled a great deal?' And as I pretended not to hear these questions, he added, not the least discouraged: 'You travel sometimes on foot, dressed as a man?'

"This question made me tremble, and I hastened to reply in the negative. But he added: 'Come! you will not confess it; but I forget nothing, and I recollect a pleasant adventure, which you cannot have forgotten either.'

"'I know not to what you allude, monsieur,' I returned, quitting the battlement of the tower to take the way back to my cell.

"'One moment! one moment!' said Mayer; 'your key is in my pocket, and you cannot get back again unless I take you. Allow me, then, *ma belle enfant*, to say two words to you——'

"'Not one, monsieur.'; I desire to return to my room, and I am sorry I ever left itn

"'*Pardieu!* You playothe fine lady well! As if nothing were known of your advetures! You think, then, that I was simple enough not t recognise y ou when you were crossing the Bœhmer Wald with a little dark fellow, not *ill-*

looking either? For the rest, I was glad to get lads for the armies of the King of Prussia, though the lass would not have answered his purpose; they say, nevertheless, that you were to his taste, and that it was because you boasted of his favour that he sent you hither. What can you expect? Fortune has its caprices, against which it is useless to rebel. Here you are fallen from a great height, but I advise you not to be too proud, and to be content with what offers itself. I am but an officer of the fortress, but I am more powerful here than a king whom no one knows, and no one fears, since he commands at too great a distance to be obeyed. You see that I have the power to elude orders, to ameliorate your sentence. Do not be ungrateful, and you shall find that the protection of an adjutant is worth as much at Spandau as that of a king at Berlin. Do you hear me? Do not run away, do not cry out; commit no follies. It will create a scandal to no purpose; I shall say what I please, and you will not be believed. Come, I do not wish to frighten you. I am naturally gentle and compassionate. Only reflect well, and when I see you again, remember that I can dispose of your fate; throw you into a dungeon or surround you with pleasing and varied amusements; make you perish of hunger, without being called to account; or help you to escape without being suspected; reflect, I tell you, I will give you time——'

"And as I made no reply, overwhelmed as I was at my utter incapability to escape the outrage of such pretensions, and the cruel humiliation of hearing them explained, this odious man added, thinking doubtless, that I wavered: 'And why not decide at once? Does it need four-and-twenty hours to recognise the only reasonable part there is to take, and to reply to the love of a gallant man, still young and rich enough to afford you, in a foreign country, a more agreeable residence than this villainous stronghold?'

"As he thus spoke, the base recruiter drew near me, and attempted, with an air at once impudent and awkward, to bar the passage and get possession of my hands. I ran towards the battlements of the tower, determined to throw myself into the moat, rather than be polluted by the least of his caresses. But at this moment a singular spectacle met my eyes, and I hastened to draw the attention of the adjutant to this object, that I might turn it from myself. It was

my salvation, but alas, it all but cost the life of a being perhaps worthier than I!

"Upon the elevated rampart which bordered the other side of the moat facing the esplanade, a figure, which looked gigantic, was running, or rather flying, upon the parapet, with a rapidity and skill partaking of the marvellous. Arrived at the extremity of this rampart, flanked by a tower at each end, the phantom sprung upon the roof of the tower, which is level with the balustrade, and climbing the pinnacle with the lightness of a cat, appeared to be lost in air.

"'What the deuce is that?' cried the adjutant, forgetting his gallantry in his cares as a jailer. 'Some prisoner is making his escape, the fiend take me! And the sentinel is asleep, by Heaven! Sentinel!' he cried, in the voice of a Stentor, 'look to yourself! Awake! awake!'

"And running towards a battlement where an alarm-bell was suspended, he set it going with a vigour worthy of so remarkable a professor of infernal music. I never heard anything more mournful than this tocsin, breaking in upon the silence of night with its sharp and grating sound. It was a savage cry of violence and brutality disturbing the harmony of the few murmurs of the winds and waves. In a moment, all was alert in the prison. I heard the clash of muskets in the hands of the sentinels who ran to the battery, and took aim, at hazard, at the first object which presented itself. The esplanade was illuminated by a red light which dimmed the beautiful azure reflection of the moon. It was M. Schwartz lighting a beacon. Signals answered one another from rampart to rampart, and the echoes caught them up in weak and plaintive tones. The alarm of cannon soon mingled its terrible and solemn tone in this diabolical symphony. Heavy footsteps resounded upon the flag-stones. I could see nothing, but I heard all these noises, and my heart sunk with terror. Mayer had hastily quitted me, but I never thought of rejoicing at this delivery; I reproached myself bitterly for having betrayed, without knowing what I was about, the escape of some unfortunate prisoner. I waited, frozen with terror, the end of the adventure, trembling at every gun-shot that sounded at intervals, and anxiously listening for the cries of the wounded fugitive which should announce to me his disastrous fate."

CHAPTER XVI.

"All this lasted more than an hour, and, thanks to Heaven! the fugitive was neither seen nor overtaken. To assure myself on this point, I joined the Schwartzes upon the esplanade. They were themselves so distressed and agitated, that they never thought of being surprised to find me out of my cell in the middle of the night. It may be that they had agreed with Mayer to let me out on that particular occasion. Schwartz, after having run up and down like a madman, and assured himself that none of the captives committed to his charge were missing, began to grow somewhat tranquil; but his wife and he were struck with as sad a consternation as though the salvation of a man's life was in their eyes a public and private calamity, an enormous outrage against divine justice. The rest of the turnkeys and the soldiers, who were coming and going in a state of great alarm, exchanged words with them expressive of the same despair, the same terror. In their eyes, an attempt at escape was apparently the blackest of all crimes. Oh, good God! how frightful did it appear to me, to see these mercenary men devoted to the barbarous employment of depriving their fellow-beings of the sacred right of liberty! But suddenly it seemed as if supreme equity had resolved to inflict an exemplary punishment on my two guardians. Madame Schwartz, having entered her apartment for a moment, hastily returned with loud cries.

"'Gottlieb! Gottlieb!" said she, in a stifled voice: 'Hold! do not fire, do not kill my son! It is he; it is certainly he."

"In the midst of the agitation of the two Schwartzes, I understood from their broken words, that Gottlieb was not to be found either in his bed, or in any other corner of their dwelling, and that probably he had returned, unperceived by them, to his ancient habit of walking upon the roofs in his sleep. Gottlieb was a somnambulist!

"As soon as this intelligence had circulated through the citadel, the excitement began to calm. Every jailer had had

time to make his rounds, and to ascertain that no prisoner had disappeared. Every one, therefore, returned to his post with indifference. The officers were enchanted with this *dénouement;* the soldiers laughed at their alarm; Madame Schwartz, out of her senses, ran about in all directions, while her husband sorrowfully explored the moat, fearing that the noise of the cannon and muskets might have caused poor Gottlieb to fall therein, suddenly aroused as he must have been, in his perilous course. I joined in this search. The moment was, perhaps, favourable for an attempt at escape on my own part, for I saw doors open and the attention of the people was abstracted; but I would not indulge the thought, absorbed as I was by that of finding the poor sufferer who had shown me so much affection.

"Nevertheless, M. Schwartz, who never altogether loses his presence of mind, perceiving the daybreak, begged me to return to my cell, seeing that it was quite contrary to all orders to let me thus wander about at unseasonable hours. He accompanied me on my return, that he might lock me in; but the first object which met my eyes as I entered my room was Gottlieb, peaceably asleep in my arm-chair. He had been fortunate enough to take refuge there before the alarm had spread throughout the fortress, or else his sleep had been so profound, his course so agile, that he had escaped all dangers. I recommended his father not to wake him hastily, and promised to watch over him until Madame Schwartz should be made acquainted with the happy intelligence.

"When I was alone with Gottlieb, I placed my hand quietly upon his shoulder, and, speaking in a low voice, tried to question him. I had heard it said, that somnambulists can hold intercourse with friendly persons, and reply to them with perfect clearness. My attempt succeeded marvellously. 'Gottlieb,' I said to him, 'where have you been to-night?"

"'To-night?' he replied; 'is it still night? I thought I saw the morning sun shining on the roofs.'

"'You have been upon the roofs, then?'

"'Without doubt, the robin, that good little angel, came to my window to call me; I flew away with him, and we have been very high up into the skies, close to the stars, and almost to the abode of the angels. As we departed, we met Beelzebub, who ran along the roofs and parapets trying to catch us. But he could not fly, because God condemns him to at

long expiation, and he sees the birds and angels flying without being able to reach them.'

"'And after having wandered about among the clouds, you descended here?"

"'The robin said to me, "Go and see my sister, who is ill," and I returned with him to find you in your cell.'

"'Then you can enter my cell, Gottlieb?"

"'Doubtless; I have come to watch over you several times since you have been ill. The robin steals the keys from my mother's pillow, and spite of Beelzebub's attempts, he has not been able to wake her when once the angel has sent her to sleep, by flying invisibly around her head.'

"'Who then has taught you to know angels and discourse so well?'

"'My master!' replied the somnambulist, with an infantine smile and an expression of artless enthusiasm.

"'And who is your master?' I asked.

"'God, first of all, and then —— the sublime shoemaker.'

"'What is the name of this sublime shoemaker?"

"'Oh, it is a great name! but you must not tell it, you see, because my mother does not know it. She does not know that I have two books in the hole in the chimney. One a book of sermons, which I pretend to read when she is looking at me, andanot her which I have devoured for the last four years, and which is my heavenly bread, my spiritual life, the book of truth, the light and the salvation of the soul.'

"'And who wrote this book?'

"'He, the shoemaker of Goilitz, Jacques Bœhmer!'

"Here we were interrupted by the arrival of Madame Schwartz, whom I prevented with difficulty from precipitating herself upon her son to embrace him. This woman adores her offspring. May her sins be forgiven her for it! She would speak to him; but Gottlieb did not hear her, and I alone was able to induce him to return to his bed, where, they assured me this morning, he had continued to sleep peacefully. He was conscious of nothing, though his strange malady and the alarm of the night, were to-day the subject of conversation throughout Spandau.

"Here I am back in my cell, after some hours of half liberty, sad and agitated. I do not desire to leave it again at such a price. And yet I might, perhaps, escape! I

think of nothing but that, now that I think myself in the power of a villain, and threatened with dangers worse than death, worse than an eternity of suffering. I must think of it seriously henceforth, and who knows but I may succeed? They say that a determined will always succeeds at last. Oh, my God, protect me!

"*May* 5.—Since these events I have lived tranquilly enough. I have learnt to look upon my days of repose, as days of happiness, and to return thanks to God for them, as in prosperity we thank him for years past without disaster. It is certain that we must know misfortune to become freed from that apathetic ingratitude in which we ordinarily exist. I reproach myself now for having allowed the happy days of my thoughfless childhood to pass away without feeling their value, and blessing Providence for according them to me. I did not sufficiently consider in those times, that I did not deserve them; and it is for this, without doubt, that I merit the ills with which I am now overwhelmed.

"I have not again seen this odious recruiter, who has become more hateful to me than he was upon the banks of the Moldau, when I simply took him for an ogre, a feeder upon children. Now I see in him a still more abominable and dangerous persecutor. When I think of the revolting pretensions of this miserable creature, of the authority he exercises upon all around me, I feel ready to die with shame and despair. Still some motives for hope and confidence remain, which I take pleasure in recalling to my thoughts, for I will not allow myself to be paralysed by fear. First of all, Schwartz does not like the adjutant, who, by what I can understand, competes with him in the wants and wishes of his prisoners, by selling them, to the great injury of Schwartz, who desires to retain the monopoly, a little air and sunlight, a morsel of bread above the allowed quantity, and other munificences of the prison *régime*. In short, these Schwartzes, the woman especially, begin to entertain a friendship for me, for the sake of that which Gottlieb bears me, and for the sake of the salutary influence which they say I have over his mind. Were I threatened, they might not, perhaps, come to my assistance; but were I seriously endangered, I could make my complaints through them to the commander of the place, and he is a gentle and humane man, as it appeared to me the only time I saw him.

Gottlieb, moreover, would be prompt to render me service, and without explaining anything to him, I have already arranged with him to this effect. He is quite ready to convey a letter, which I also hold in readiness.

* * * *

"No news from the prisoner No. 2. If Mayer did not tell me an impudent falsehood when repeating the words, it is Amelia of Prussia who thus accuses me of treachery. May God forgive her for doubting one who has never doubted her, spite of the same accusations against her! I will take no further steps to see her. By seeking to justify myself I might compromise her still further than I have already done without knowing how.

* * * *

"*May* 10.—For some time I have been wondering what has become of those unknown friends, those marvellous protectors, whose intervention in my affairs the Count de Saint Germain had announced to me, and who, apparently, took part in them only to hasten the disasters with which the royal benevolence threatened me. If these were the conspirators whose punishment I share, it would seem that they were all dispersed and crushed at the same time as myself, or else that they abandoned me upon my refusal to escape from the claws of M. Buddenbrock, the day I was transferred from Berlin to Spandau. Well, here they have turned up again, and have chosen Gottlieb for their emissary. The rash men! May they not end by drawing upon the head of this innocent boy the same evils they have drawn upon mine?

"This morning Gottlieb secretly brought me a note thus conceived:—

"'We are working for your deliverance; the moment approaches. But a new danger threatens you, which will retard the success of our enterprise. Distrust all who urge you to flight before we have given you certain counsels and precise details. A snare is laid for you. Be upon your guard, and persevere in your strength.

"'Your brothers,

"'The Invisibles.'

"This note fell at the feet of Gottlieb this morning as he was crossing one of the courts of the prison. He firmly believes that it fell from heaven, and that the robin has something to do with it. By making him talk, without seeking to oppose his singular ideas too forcibly, I have learnt strange things, which are, perhaps, grounded upon truth. I asked him if he knew who the Invisibles were.

"'No one knows,' he replied, 'though every one pretends to know.'

"How, Gottlieb! you have then heard of people who are thus called?'

"'During the time I was apprenticed to the master shoemaker of the town, I heard a great deal of these things.'

"'They are spoken of then? The people know them?'

"'This is how I came to hear about it,' he replied, 'and of all the words I ever heard, these are among the few which are worth listening to and remembering. A poor workman among our comrades wounded his hand so badly, that it became a question whether it should be cut off or not. He was the only support of a numerous family whom he had assisted up to that time with much courage and affection. He came to see us, with his hand bound up, and said to us sadly, as he watched us working, "You are very happy to have your hands at liberty! As for me, I think I shall soon be obliged to go into the hospital, and my old mother must beg to prevent my little brothers and sisters from dying of hunger." A collection was proposed, but we were all so poor, and I, though born of rich parents, had so little money at my disposal, that we could not raise enough effectually to assist our poor comrade. Every one having emptied his pocket, sought to devise some means to save Franz from this step. But no one could succeed, for Franz had tried everything, and had met with repulse on all sides. They say that the king is very rich, and that his father has left him a large treasure. But they also say that he employs it in equipping soldiers; and as it was war-time, and the king was absent, and every one was afraid of coming to want himself, the poor people suffered greatly, and Franz could find no sufficient aid among the charitable. As for the uncharitable, they have never one farthing at their disposal. Suddenly a young man in the workshop said to Franz—

"'In your place, I know what I should do, but perhaps you have not the courage?'

"'It is not courage I want,' said Franz; 'what must I do?'

"'You must address yourself to the Invisibles.'

"Franz appeared to understand what he said, for he shook his head with an air of repugnance, and made no reply. Some young men, who, like myself, knew not what this meant, asked an explanation, and were answered on all sides.

"'You do not know the Invisibles? It is easy to see that you are but children! The Invisibles are people who are not seen, but who nevertheless act. They do all sorts of good, and all sorts of evil. No one knows where they live, but there are some of them everywhere. It is said that they are to be found in all the four quarters of the globe; they assassinate many travellers, while they assist others against the brigands, as these travellers are judged by them worthy of chastisement or protection. They are the instigators of all revolutions; they frequent every court, direct all affairs, decide upon war and peace, redeem prisoners, relieve the unfortunate, punish the wicked, make kings tremble on their thrones; in short, they are the cause of all the happiness and unhappiness in the world. They may perhaps have been mistaken more than once, but they say that their intentions are good, and besides, who can say, that which is a misfortune to-day shall not be the cause of a great happiness to-morrow.'

"As for Franz, he hesitated to apply to them, 'because,' said he, 'when once any one has accepted a benefit from them, he finds himself bound to them for this life and the next, to the great injury of his salvation and to the great peril of his relations.' Nevertheless, necessity overcame fear. One of our comrades, he who had given him the advice, and who was strongly suspected of belonging to the Invisibles, though he as strongly denied it, gave him in secret the means of making what he called the signal of distress. We have never learnt in what this signal consisted. Some say that Franz traced a cabalistic sign with his blood on his door; others that he went at midnight to a mound between four roads, at the foot of a cross, where a cavalier in black appeared to him. Finally, there were some who spoke simply

of a letter which he had deposited in the hollow of an old weeping willow, at the entrance to a cemetery. One thing is certain, that he received assistance, that his family were enabled to wait for his cure without having recourse to begging, and that they had the means of consulting a skilful surgeon, who saved his hand. Of the Invisibles he never said a word, except that he continually blesses them. And this, my sister, is how I learned for the first time the existence of these terrible and benevolent beings.

"'But you, who are better taught than these young workmen,' I said to Gottlieb, 'what do you think of the Invisibles? Are they sectarians, charlatans, or conspirators?'

"Here Gottlieb, who until this had expressed himself with perfect clearness, fell back into his customary incoherencies, and I could draw nothing from him, but that they were beings of a truly invisible and impalpable nature, who, like God and the angels, could not communicate with men, save through borrowing certain appearances.

"*May* 12.—The prodigies are indeed beginning, and my destiny is in the hands of the Invisibles. Like Gottlieb, I ask, 'Are they of God or the devil?' To-day Gottlieb was called by the sentinel who guards the esplanade, and who keeps his round upon the small bastion which terminates it. This sentinel, according to Gottlieb, is no other than an Invisible, a spirit. The proof is, that Gottlieb who knows all the sentinels, and who talks with them freely, when they amuse themselves by ordering shoes, has never seen this one before, and then, too, appeared to him to be of a stature more than human, while his face wore an undefinable expression.

"'Gottlieb,' he said to him, speaking in a very low voice, 'La Porporina must be delivered in three nights. This depends upon you; you must take the keys of her chamber from the pillow of your mother, lead her across your kitchen, and bring her here, to the end of the esplanade. There I will take charge of the rest. Give her notice that she may be ready; and remember that if you are wanting in prudence and zeal, she, you, and I, are lost.'

"This is the point to which I am arrived. This news rendered me ill with excitement. I have been in a fever all through the night; all through the night, I have heard the

fantastic violin. To fly! to quit this gloomy prison! to escape, above all, from the terror this Mayer causes me! Ah! if my life alone were to be risked for this, I am ready; but what will be the consequences of my flight to Gottlieb, to this sentinel whom I know not, and who so gratuitously devotes himself to my service; in short, to those unknown accomplices who are about to take upon them a new charge? I tremble, I hesitate, I can decide upon nothing. I am still writing to you without thinking of preparing for my flight. No; I will not fly; at least, without being assured as to the fate of my friends and protectors. This poor Gottlieb has made up his mind to all. When I ask him if he has no fear, he replies that he would suffer martyrdom with joy for me; and when to this I add that perhaps it will grieve him never to see me again, he adds that that is his answer, and that I know not what he intends doing. Besides, he looks upon all this as a command from heaven, and he obeys without reflection the unknown power which urges him on. But I attentively read the billet of the Invisibles, which I received some days ago, and I fear lest the counsel of this sentinel should be the snare which I am to distrust; I have still forty-eight hours before me. If Mayer should appear again, I shall risk all; if he contrive to forget me, and I have no better guarantee than the warning of a stranger, I shall remain.

"*May* 13.—Oh! decidedly, I shall trust to destiny, to the Providence which sends me unhoped-for aid. I will go, I will lean upon the powerful arm which offers to protect me! As I was walking this morning upon the esplanade, where I ventured, in the hope of receiving from the *spirits* who surround me some new revelation, I looked towards the bastion where the sentinel is. There were two, one on guard, his musket upon his shoulder; the other, coming and going, as though he were searching for something. The large figure of the last attracted my attention; it did not seem altogether unknown to me. But I could only look at him by stealth, and at every turn in my walk I was obliged to turn my back to him. At last, as I was going towards him, he also came towards us, as though by chance; and though he was upon a glacis considerably higher than ours, I completely recognised him, and could scarcely refrain from crying out. It was Karl, the Bohemian, the deserter whom

I saved from the claws of Mayer in the forest of Bohemia; the Karl whom I had afterwards seen at Koswald, in Moravia, at the house of Count Haditz, and who sacrificed to me a project of formidable vengeance. He is a man devoted to me, body and soul, and whose large face, flat nose, red beard, and glassy eyes, appeared to me to-day as beautiful as the features of the angel Gabriel.

"'It is he,' said Gottlieb, in a whisper, 'it is the emissary of the Invisibles, an Invisible himself, I am certain! At least he could be if he would; it is your deliverer, it is he who will take you hence to-night.'

"My heart beat so quickly that I could scarcely stand: tears of joy escaped from my eyes. To hide my emotion from the other sentinel I approached the parapet, withdrawing from the bastion, and feigning to contemplate the herbs in the moat. I saw, however, by stealth, Karl and Gottlieb exchanging a few words which I could not catch. After a few moments, Gottlieb returned to me, and said rapidly—

"'He is coming down here; he is going to our kitchen to drink a bottle of wine. Pretend to pay no attention to him. My father is gone out. Whilst my mother goes to fetch the wine from the canteen, do you enter the kitchen, as if to return to your own room, and you can speak to him for a moment.'

"In fact, when Karl had spoken for some minutes with Madame Schwartz, who does not disdain to refresh the veterans of the citadel to her own profit, I saw Gottlieb on the threshold. I understood that this was the signal, and instantly I found myself alone with Karl. Gottlieb had followed his mother into the canteen. Poor boy; it seemed as though friendship had suddenly revealed to him the unceasing presence of mind necessary in the practices of real life. He committed a thousand awkwardnesses, on purpose, let fall the bottle, enraged his mother, and detained her long enough for me to come to an understanding with my deliverer.

"'Signora, I am here at last, and here also you are. I was retaken by the recruiters: it was my destiny. But the king recognised me, and granted me pardon for your sake, perhaps; however, he permitted me to depart, even promising me some money, which, however, he has not given me. I returned to the country when I heard you were here.I

sought a famous sorcerer to know how I could serve you; the sorcerer sent me to Prince Henri, and Prince Henri sent me to Spandau. There are about us powerful people whom I know not, but who are labouring for you. They spare neither money nor trouble, I assure you. In short, all is ready. To-morrow evening the doors will open of themselves before us. All that could bar our passage is gained. There are but the Schwartzes who are not in our interest; but to-morrow they will sleep more soundly than usual, and when they awake you will already be far away. We shall take Gottlieb with us, who requests to follow you, and I shall decamp with you; we run no risk, all is provided for. Be in readiness, signora, and now return to the esplanade, that the old woman may not find you here.'

"I could but explain my gratitude to Karl by tears, and I ran away to hide them from the inquisitive look of Madame Schwartz.

"Oh, my friends! I shall then see you again! I shall once more press you in my arms! I shall once more escape this terrible Mayer! I shall see the wide heavens, the smiling fields and woods, Venice, Italy; I shall sing once more, I shall find sympathy! Oh, this prison has tempered my life, and renewed my heart, which was growing cold in the apathy of indifference. How I shall live, how I shall love, how good and pious I shall be!

"And yet, profound enigma of the human heart! I feel terrified and almost sad at the idea of quitting this cell, where I have passed three months in a perpetual effort of courage and resignation; this esplanade where I have walked up and down in such melancholy reveries; these old walls which appear so high, so cold, so serene in the light of the moon! And this large moat, with its dull water of so fine a green, and these thousands of pale flowers with which the spring has strewn its banks! And, above all, my redbreast! Gottlieb pretends that he will follow us, but at that hour he will be fast asleep in his ivy, and will not perceive our departure. Oh, dear little creature! may you be the companion and consolation of those who succeed me in this cell! May they protect and respect you as I have done!

"I must try and sleep that I may be strong and calm tomorrow. I will seal this manuscript, which I shall take

with me. I have procured, through Gottlieb, a fresh supply of paper, pencils, and tapers, which I will leave in my hiding-place, that these riches, invaluable to prisoners, may evoke the joy of some one after me."

Here finishes the journal of Consuelo. We renew the faithful recital of her adventures. It is necessary to tell the reader that Karl made no vain boast, when he said that he was assisted and employed by powerful personages. Those invisible cavaliers who laboured for the deliverance of our heroine had freely bestowed their gold. Several turnkeys, eight or ten veterans, and even one officer, were engaged to remain quiet, to see nothing, and in case of alarm, only to run after the fugitives for form's sake. Upon the evening fixed for the escape, Karl had supped with the Schwartz family, and pretending to be drunk, had invited them to drink with him. The mother Schwartz had an ardent throat, like most women given to the culinary art. Her husband had no hatred to the *eau-de-vie* of his own canteen, when he drank it at the expense of another. A narcotic drug, secretly introduced by Karl into the bottle, assisted the effect of the strong liquor. The Schwartzes gained their beds with difficulty, and snored so soundly, that Gottlieb, who attributed everything to supernatural influences, did not fail to think them enchanted as he approached them to steal the keys; Karl had returned to the bastion to keep his watch. Consuelo arrived without difficulty with Gottlieb as far as this spot, and courageously mounted the ladder of cords which the deserter threw to her. But poor Gottlieb who persisted in sharing her flight, in spite of all her remonstrances, was in great embarrassment at this juncture. He who in his attacks of somnambulism ran like a cat on the roofs, was incapable of making three active steps upon the most even ground now he was awake. Sustained by the conviction that he was following a messenger from heaven, he had no fear, and would have thrown himself, without hesitation, to the bottom of the ramparts had Karl advised him to do so. But his audacious confidence increased the dangers of his awkwardness. He climbed at random, disdaining to see or calculate anything. After having made Consuelo tremble twenty times, as twenty times she thought him lost, he at last attained the platform

of the bastion, and from thence our three fugitives directed their steps across the corridors of that part of the citadel where the sentinels initiated into their secret were lodged. They advanced without obstacle, when they suddenly found themselves face to face with the Adjutant Nanteuil, otherwise the ex-recruiter Mayer. Consuelo gave herself up for lost; but Karl prevented her from flying, saying,

"Fear nothing, signora; Monsieur l'Adjutant is in your interest."

"Stay here," said Nanteuil, hastily, "there is something wrong. L'Adjutant Weber has taken it into his head to come and sup in our quarters with the old fool of a lieutenant! They are in the room you must cross. We must find a means of getting rid of them; Karl, return quickly to your post, I will fetch you when the time comes. The lady will take shelter in my room. Gottlieb shall come with me. I will pretend he is walking in his sleep; my two simpletons will run out to see him, and once the room is empty, I will take the key so that they shall not return to it."

Gottlieb, who did not know that he was a somnambulist, stared with astonishment; but Karl having signed to him to stay, he did so blindly. Consuelo felt an insurmountable repugnance to entering Mayer's room.

"What do you fear from this man?" said Karl, in a low voice. "He has too large a sum to gain to think of betraying you. His advice is good. I return to the bastion. Too much haste would ruin us."

"Too much coolness and prudence may ruin us also," thought Consuelo. Nevertheless she yielded. She had a weapon in her possession. As she crossed the kitchen of the Schwartzes she had possessed herself of a small knife, which somewhat re-assured her.

She had given Karl her money and her papers, retaining only her crucifix, which she was not far from regarding as an amulet.

Mayer locked her in his room for greater security, and withdrew with Gottlieb. At the end of ten minutes, which appeared an age to Consuelo, Nanteuil came back.

"Signora," he said to her, in Italian; "you have yet half-an-hour to wait. The rascals are drunk and will not raise the siege till the clock strikes one; then the jailer who has the care of this quarter will turn them out."

"And what have you done with Gottlieb, monsieur?"

"Your friend Gottlieb is in safety behind a bundle of faggots, where he may sleep if he pleases, when he will, perhaps, walk all the better as he follows you."

"Karl will have notice given him, will he not?"

"Unless I would have him hanged," replied the adjutant, with an expression which appeared diabolical to Consuelo. "I must take care not to leave him there. Are you satisfied with me, signora?"

"I cannot prove my gratitude to you now, monsieur," replied Consuelo, with a coldness under which she vainly sought to disguise her disgust; "but I hope shortly to acquit myself honourably towards you."

"*Pardieu!* You may acquit yourself at once," said Mayer; "one kiss is no such great matter; and that I think I have earned a right to," added he, approaching Consuelo.

Consuelo, terrified, flew to the other side of the room. Mayer followed her, and in the struggle which ensued, the point of the knife which Consuelo carried, wounded him in the arm. Mayer was very fat, and the wound was not dangerous; but when he saw his blood flow, being as cowardly as he was base, he thought himself killed, and fell prostrate on the bed, murmuring, "I am assassinated, I am lost!" Consuelo really believed she had killed him, and almost fainted herself. After a few moments of silent terror, she ventured to approach him, and, seeing him motionless, resolved to pick up the key of the room, which she had let fall at his feet; scarcely was it in her hand ere she felt her courage return, and unhesitatingly quitted the room, she sprung at hazard into the passage. She found all the doors open before her, and descended a staircase without knowing whither it led. But her limbs failed her when she heard the alarm bell sound, a few moments after the roll of the drum, and then that cannon which had so terrified her on the night when Gottlieb's somnambulism had caused an alarm. She fell on her knees on the last step, and joining her hands, invoked the protection of God for Gottlieb and the generous Karl. Separated from them, after having allowed them to expose themselves to death for her sake, she no longer felt any courage, any desire for safety. Heavy and hurried steps sounded in her ears, the light of torches flared

before her eyes: and she knew not whether they were real or imaginary, but gliding into a corner lost all consciousness.

CHAPTER XVII.

When Consuelo returned to a sense of existence, she experienced an indescribable feeling of happiness, without being able to recall where she was, or the events which had led her thither. She was reclining in the open air, and without suffering any inconvenience from the coldness of the night, she could see the stars shining in the vast pure heavens above her. To this enchanting *coup d'œil* quickly succeeded the sensation of rapid but agreeable motion. The noise of oars in the water, at marked intervals, gave her to understand that she was in a boat, and crossing the moat. A gentle warmth penetrated her limbs, and there was something in the stillness of the waters, while the wind was rustling among the numerous aquatic herbs, that recalled the lagunes of Venice in the fair nights of spring. Consuelo raised her drooping head, looked around her, and saw two rowers exerting all their strength at one extremity of the boat. She looked for the citadel, and saw it already far in the distance, gloomy as a mountain of stone, in the transparent framework of air and water. She thought herself saved: but immediately remembering her friends, she anxiously pronounced the name of Karl.

"I am here! not a word, signora; we must keep profound silence!" replied Karl, who was rowing nearest to her

Consuelo took the other rower for Gottlieb, and too weak to torment herself longer, she fell back in her first attitude. A hand drew around her the warm folding cloak in which she was enwrapped, but she moved it gently from her face, hat she might contemplate the starry and boundless azure above her.

In proportion as she felt her strength, and the elasticity of her limbs returning, paralysed as they had been by a violent nervous crisis, she collected her thoughts, and the remembrance of Mayer presented itself before her. She made an

effort to rise once more, as she perceived that her head was resting upon the knees, while her body was sustained by the arm of a third passenger, whom she had not yet seen, or rather, whom she had taken for a bale of goods, so closely did he lie muffled and motionless, stretched out behind her at the bottom of the boat.

Happily, the boat touched land at this moment, and Consuelo hastened to rise, take the hand of Karl, and spring upon the shore; but the shock of landing threw her off her balance, and she fell back into the arms of the mysterious person. Then she saw him standing, and, by the feeble light of the stars, distinguished that he wore a black mask. He was a head taller than Mayer, and though enveloped in a large cloak, his figure had the elegance of a slight and well-constructed frame. These circumstances completely reassured Consuelo; she accepted the arm he silently offered her, and took some fifty paces with him upon the strand, followed by Karl and another individual, who had by signs renewed the injunction not to speak a single word. The country around was silent and deserted; no movement was as yet visible in the citadel. Behind a hedge stood a carriage with four horses, into which the unknown mounted with Consuelo, the third individual disappearing before Consuelo could observe him. She yielded to the silent and solemn haste of her deliverer, and the carriage, which was very easy hung, rolled away into the night with the rapidity of lightning. The noise of the wheels, and the gallop of the horses, were not favourable to conversation. Consuelo felt greatly intimidated and even somewhat alarmed at her *tête-à-tête* with the unknown. Still, when she saw that there was no danger in breaking the silence, she thought it her duty to express her gratitude and joy; but she obtained no reply. The unknown had placed himself opposite to her in token of respect, he now took her hand, and pressed it between his own, without saying a word, and then drew back into the corner of the carriage, while Consuelo, who had hoped to engage him in conversation, dared not persist in defiance of this tacit refusal. She greatly desired to know to what generous and devoted friend she owed her safety, but she felt, though without acknowledging it to herself, an instinctive feeling of respect mingled with fear, and her imagination lent to this strange travelling companion all the romantic

qualities which befitted the circumstances. At last the thought occurred to her that he was some subaltern agent of the Invisibles, perhaps a faithful servant who feared to fail in the duties of his condition by permitting himself to converse with her at night, and *tête-à-tête.*

At the end of two hours' rapid movement, the carriage stopped in the midst of a gloomy wood; the relay they had expected to find had not yet arrived. The unknown withdrew to some distance, either to see if it were approaching, or to conceal his uneasiness and impatience. Consuelo descended also, and walked up and down a neighbouring path with Karl, of whom she had a thousand questions to ask.

"Thank God, signora, here you are alive!" said this faithful attendant.

"And you, also, dear Karl."

"Nothing could be better, since you are saved.

"And Gottlieb; how is he?"

"I presume he is quite well in his bed at Spandau."

"Just Heaven! and was Gottlieb left behind, then? He will suffer for us all."

"He will suffer neither for himself nor for any other. The alarm given, I know not by whom, I ran to join you at all risks, seeing that the moment had arrived to dare all or lose all. I met the adjutant, Nanteuil, that is to say, the recruiter Mayer, who was very pale."

"You met him, Karl? Standing, walking?"

"Why not?"

"He was not wounded then?"

"Ah! yes; he told me he was slightly hurt by falling in the dark upon a stand of arms. But I did not pay much attention to it, and asked him hastily where you were. He knew nothing; he had lost his senses. I thought I saw grounds for suspicion that he intended to betray us; for the alarm bell, which I had just heard, and whose sound I well knew, was that in his room. But he seems to have changed his purpose; for he knew well, the rascal, that he had a great deal of money to gain by helping you to escape, He assisted me, therefore, to allay the storm, telling all those we met that the somnambulist, Gottlieb, had again caused a false alarm. In fact, as though Gottlieb desired to bear us out in this, we found him in a corner, in that singular sleep

with which he is sometimes overtaken in the middle of the day, wherever he may happen to be, on the parapet or esplanade alike. One would have said that the agitation of his flight made him sleep standing, which is too marvellous to believe, at least, unless he had unwittingly drunk at supper a few drops of the beverage with which I had supplied his dear parents. What I know is, that they shut him up in the first chamber we came to, to prevent his walking upon the glacis, and that I judged it best to leave him there till further orders. He can be accused of nothing, and my flight will sufficiently explain yours. The Schwartzes slept too well to hear the alarm bell in their quarters, and no one will have thought of seeing whether your rooms were open or shut. It will not be till to-morrow then that the alarm will become serious. M. Nanteuil assisted me to dissipate it, and I began seeking for you, while pretending to return to my dormitory. I had the good fortune to find you a few steps from the door we were to pass through in our flight. The jailers on that side were all gained. At first I was greatly alarmed at finding you almost dead. But dead or living I would not leave you behind, so I carried you without difficulty to the boat which was awaiting us in the moat. And then there happened to me a disagreeable little adventure which I will tell you some other time, signora. You have had emotions enough to-day, and what I would tell you might, perhaps, cause you some uneasiness."

"No, no, Karl! I desire to know all; I am strong enough to hear all."

"Oh! I know you, signora; you will blame me. You have a way of your own in looking at things. I remember Roswald when you prevented me ——."

"Karl, your refusal to speak cruelly torments me. Speak I conjure you; I must know."

"Well, signora, it is a small misfortune after all; and if there be sin in it, that only concerns me. Just as I was passing with you in the boat under a low arch, and going very slowly that I might not make too much noise with my oars in that sounding spot, there at the end of a small pier, which runs half the length of the arch, I was stopped by three men, who, jumping into the boat seized me by the collar. I must tell you that the person travelling with us in the carriage, and who is already one of us," added Karl,

lowering his voice, "had the imprudence to give two-thirds of the promised sum to Nanteuil as he came through the last postern. Nanteuil, thinking that he might well be contented with this and gain the rest by betraying us, had posted himself there with a couple of villains like himself, in order to catch us. He hoped first of all to get rid of your protector and mine, so that no one might speak of the money he had received. This is why, doubtless, his rascals attempted to assassinate us. But your travelling companion, signora, all peaceable as he seems, is a lion in a combat. I can tell you I shall long remember it. With two strokes of his arm he got rid of the first fellow by throwing him into the water; the second, intimidated, sprung back on the pier, and stood aloof to see how my struggle with the adjutant would end. My faith! signora, I did not acquit myself so gracefully as his brilliant lordship, whose name I know not. My contest lasted half-a-minute, which is not at all to my honour; for this Nanteuil, who is usually as strong as a bull, appeared weak and feeble, as though he were frightened, or as if the wound of which he had spoken to me gave him pain. At last, feeling that he was giving way, I raised him in my arms and plunged him in the water. Then his lordship said to me, 'Do not kill him; it is useless.' But I, who knew him, who knew how he could swim, how persevering and cruel he was, how capable of all evil, I, who had elsewhere felt the weight of his fists, and who had a desire to settle with him, I could not refrain from giving him a blow with my clenched hand upon his head: a blow which will preserve him from receiving or giving any more, signora! May God give peace to his soul, and mercy to mine! He went down in the water straight as a stick, and rose no more than if he had been marble. His comrade, whom his lordship had dismissed from the boat in the same way, had made a plunge, and was already at the end of the pier, where his companion, the most prudent of the three, was assisting him to his feet. This was no easy thing; the bank is so narrow in that spot that the one overbalanced the other, and both fell into the water. As they were struggling, swearing at one another, and keeping up a little swimming match, I made the best use of my oars, and soon gained a place where a second rower, a brave fisherman by trade, had promised to come and help me with one or two good strokes across the moat. Now I felt the

use, signora, of having exercised myself in the profession of a rower upon the peaceable waters of the park at Roswald. I knew not the day in which I took part, before you, in that fine rehearsal, that I should some day have to sustain a naval combat for you, less magnificent, but somewhat more serious. This crossed my memory when I found myself in the middle of the water, and a mad laugh seized me, but a very disagreeable one! I did not make the least noise, at least I could not hear myself, but my teeth chattered in my mouth; I felt as though an iron hand were at my throat, while the perspiration ran down my forehead, cold as ice! Ah! I see one cannot kill a man as tranquilly as a fly. And yet this is not the first since I have been in battle; but then that was war; while this was done in a corner, in the dead of night, behind a wall, without saying a word. This resembles a premeditated murder. And yet it was a case of self-defence! And still more, this is not the first assassination I have premeditated! Do you remember, signora? But for you——I should have done it! But I believe I should have repented afterwards. One thing certain is, that I laughed a villainous laugh on that moat, and even now I cannot help it. It was so droll to see him go right down into the moat like a reed planted in water! And when all I could see was his head just about to disappear, his head flattened by my blow, mercy! how ugly it was! It terrified me! I see it still!"

Consuelo, fearing the effect of this terrible emotion upon poor Karl, sought to overcome her own feelings that she might calm and allay his. Karl was born patient and gentle, like a true Bohemian serf. The life of bustle into which destiny had thrown him, was not made for him; and while accomplishing acts of energy and vengeance, he experienced the horror of remorse and the terrors of devotion. Consuelo led him away from his gloomy thoughts, it might be to change her own also. She also had armed herself this night for murder.

"My poor Karl," said she, "you have played the part of the executioner to-night! It is terrible. Console yourself in the thought that you had neither foreseen nor resolved upon what necessity has driven you to do. Tell me of this stranger who has laboured so generously for my deliverance. Do you not know him?"

"No, signora; I saw him this evening for the first time, and I know not his name."

"But where is he taking us, Karl?"

"I know not, signora. I am forbidden to inquire; and I am even charged to tell you that if you make the least attempt while on the road to know where you are, and where you are going, you will be abandoned. It is certain that nothing but good is intended us; I am then resolved, on my part, to allow myself to be led like a child."

"Have you seen this stranger's face?"

"I saw it, by the reflection of a lantern, when I was placing you in the boat. It is a noble face, signora; I never saw a finer. One would say it belonged to a king."

"And nothing more, Karl! Is he young?"

"Somewhere about thirty."

"What language does he speak?"

"Pure Bohemian; the true language of a Christian! He has not said above four or five words to me. But what pleasure it gave me to hear them in my native tongue, if it had not been at such an awful moment! 'Do not kill him; it is useless!' Oh! he was in error; it was very necessary; was it not, signora?"

"What did he say when you committed this terrible act?"

"I think, God forgive me! that he did not perceive it. He had thrown himself at the bottom of the boat where you were lying as if you were dead, and in the fear that some blow might reach you, he made a rampart for you with his body. And when we found ourselves safe in the middle of the water, he raised you in his arms, wrapped you in a large cloak, which to all appearance he had brought for you, and sustained you against his heart, as a mother holds her child. Oh! he appears to love you greatly, signora. It is impossible that you do not know him."

"I may perhaps know him; but since I have not been able to perceive his face——"

"It is certainly singular that he should hide himself from you; though nothing on the part of these people ought to astonish us."

"What people, tell me?"

"Those who are called the Chevaliers, the Black Masks, the Invisibles. I know no more about them than you,

signora; though for the last two months they have been conducting me, step by step, to your succour and deliverance."

The deadened sounds of a horse's gallop upon the turf, now made itself heard. In two minutes the horses were changed, as also the postillion, who did not belong to the royal staff, and who secretly exchanged some rapid words with the unknown. This last offered his hand to Consuelo, who returned to the carriage with him. He seated himself in the corner, as far away from her as possible, and only broke the solemn silence of night by striking his repeater at two o'clock. The day was yet far from breaking, though the cry of the quail in the heath, and the distant barking of farm-dogs was to be heard. The night was magnificent; the constellation of the Great Bear stretched far out in the horizon. The rolling of the carriage drowned the harmonious sounds of the country, and their backs were turned upon the large northern stars. Consuelo saw that they were moving south.

CHAPTER XVIII.

La Porporina, judging that it was the determination of her companion not to exchange a single word with her, thought she could not do better than respect the strange oath which he seemed to observe, after the manner of the ancient knight-errants. To escape from the gloomy images and sad reflections which the recital of Karl suggested, she tried to think only of the unknown future which was opening before her, and by degrees fell into a reverie full of charms.

Our fugitive found herself, besides, in a situation sufficiently singular to give rise to many castles in the air. This mystery which enveloped her as a cloud, this fatality which drew her into a fantastic world, this species of paternal affection which surrounded her with miracles, all this was enough to charm a young and poetical imagination. She remembered the words of Scripture, which, in her days of captivity, she had set to music.

"For He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep

thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me."

These words had henceforth a clearer and more divine signification to her perception. In an age when there is no longer belief in a direct revelation, and a sensible manifestation of the Divinity, the protection of heaven takes the form of assistance, affection, and devotion on the part of our fellow-beings. There is something so sweet in abandoning our destiny to those who love us, and in feeling, so to say, that we are borne on by one another! It is a happiness so great that it would quickly corrupt us did we not resist ourselves. It is the happiness of the child, whose golden dreams are untroubled upon the maternal breast by any of the apprehensions of real life.

These thoughts, which presented themselves as in a dream to Consuelo, at the sudden and unlooked-for escape from so cruel an existence, soothed her with a species of holy voluptuousness, until sleep came to drown and confound them in that repose of soul and body, which may be called an annihilation felt and enjoyed.

The break of day and the cold of the morning at last aroused Consuelo from this species of lethargy. She found herself alone in the carriage, and asked if she could have dreamed. She endeavoured to lower one of the blinds, but they were all closed by a bolt on the outside, or some spring, of which she could not detect the secret. She could discover nothing of the country, and consequently could make no observation, no discovery, as to the road she was upon. There was something absolute and despotic in the protection afforded her. This flight resembled a carrying off, and she began to be anxious and alarmed.

The carriage stopped, and Karl came to open the blind.

"If you would like to walk a little, signora," said he, "monsieur le chevalier invites you to do so. The hill is steep for the horses, and we are in the midst of a wood, so that there appears to be no danger."

Consuelo leaned upon Karl's shoulder, and sprung upon the road, without giving him time to let down the steps. She hoped to see her travelling companion, her improvised lover. She did, indeed, see him, but some paces in advance

of her, and consequently, with his back turned towards her, enveloped in the same large grey cloak, which he appeared determined to wear by day as by night. His walk, and the little that could be seen of his hair and boots, announced the elegance of a man careful to set off the advantages of his person by a *galante toilette*, as it was then called. The handle of his sword, on which the rays of the rising sun fell, shone like a star at his side, and the perfume of the powder, of which people of *bon ton* were the most careful in selecting, left behind him in the atmosphere of the morning the balmy trace of a man *comme il faut*.

"Alas!" thought Consuelo, "perhaps he is some coxcomb, some contraband lord, some proud noble. Whatever he is, he turns his back upon me this morning, and with good reason!"

"Why do you call him the chevalier?" she asked of Karl, continuing her reflections aloud.

"Because I have heard him called thus by the postillions."

"The chevalier what?"

"Monsieur le chevalier, simply. But why do you want to know, signora? Since he desires to remain unknown to you, it seems to me that the great services he has rendered you, at the peril of his life, entitle him to your consideration in this respect. As for me, I could travel ten years with him without ever asking him where he was conducting me. He is so handsome, so good, so gay!"

"So gay! That man so gay?"

"Certainly. He is so happy at having rescued you, that he cannot keep quiet. He asks me a thousand questions about Spandau, you, Gottlieb, myself, and the King of Prussia. I tell him all I know, all that has happened to me, even the adventure at Roswald! It is such a happiness to speak Bohemian, and to be listened to by a man who understands you, instead of by those asses of Prussians, who understand nothing but their own dog of a language."

"He is, then, a Bohemian?"

"I took the liberty of asking him this question, and he replied very shortly, nay, even drily, *no*. I was wrong to question him, since it was his good pleasure to make me such an answer."

"Is he always masked?"

"Only when he approaches you, signora. Oh! it is a joke! he wishes, doubtless, to puzzle."

The confidence and joyousness of Karl did not altogether reassure Consuelo. She saw that he joined to great determination and bravery an uprightness and simplicity of heart which might be easily abused. She remembered the note of the Invisibles:—

"A snare is spread for you; a new danger threatens you. Distrust whoever would urge you to flight till we have given you certain counsels. Keep up your courage, &c."

No other note had come to confirm this, and Consuelo, giving way to the joy of finding Karl, had thought this faithful servant sufficiently authorised to serve her. The unknown —might he not be a traitor? Whither was he conducting her with such mystery? Consuelo knew of no friend who bore any resemblance to the appearance of the chevalier, at least, with the exception of Frederick de Trenck. But Karl was well acquainted with him, therefore this could not be he. The Count de Saint Germain was older; Cagliostro not so tall. As she looked at the unknown in the distance, trying to discern in him an old friend, Consuelo arrived at the conclusion that she had never seen any one walk with such ease and grace. Albert alone had been gifted with such majesty; but his slow walk and habitual stoop excluded that appearance of strength, that lightness, that chivalric bearing which characterised the unknown.

The wood was drawing to an end, and the horses began trotting to overtake the travellers, who had preceded them. The chevalier, without turning, stretched out his arm, and shook his handkerchief. Karl understood this signal, and assisted Consuelo to remount the carriage, saying to her, "You will find, signora, in some large chests, under the seats, linen, clothes, and all necessaries for breakfast and dinner, if need be. There are also books. In short, it is a kind of moving hotel, and it looks as though you are not to leave it for some time."

"Karl," said Consuelo, "I implore you to ask monsieur le chevalier, if I shall be free, once we have passed the frontiers, to offer him my thanks, and go my way."

"Oh! signora, I should never dare to say such a discourteous thing to so amiable a man."

"But I require you to do so. You will give me his reply when next we change horses, as he will not speak to me himself."

His reply was that the lady was perfectly free, and that all her wishes were orders, but that it concerned her safety and the life of her guide, as well as that of Karl, not to oppose the plans formed for her route, and the choice of her asylum. Karl added, with an air of unaffected reproach, that this distrust had appeared to pain the chevalier greatly, and that he had become sad and gloomy. She was filled with remorse, and bid Karl tell him that she placed her fate in the hands of the Invisibles.

The day passed without any incident. Shut up and concealed in the carriage like a state prisoner, Consuelo could form no conjecture as to the direction of her journey. She tried to read, but her mind was too highly pre-occupied.

Towards the middle of the night the carriage stopped in a ravine. The weather was gloomy; the noise of the wind among the foliage resembled that of running water.

"Signora," said Karl, opening the door, "here we are arrived at the most dangerous part of our journey: we must pass the frontier. With money and audacity everything can be done, it is said. Still it would not be prudent for you to make the trial of this on the high road, and beneath the eyes of the police. I run no risk; I who am nobody; I am going to conduct the carriage on foot, with one horse, as if I were bringing home a new purchase to my master's, in a neighbouring estate. You must go a byeway with monsieur le chevalier, and will perhaps have to pass over difficult paths. Do you feel strong enough to walk a mile upon bad roads?"

Upon a reply in the affirmative from Consuelo, she found the arm of the chevalier ready to receive her own.

Karl added, "If you arrive before me at the place of rendezvous, you will wait for me without fear, will you not signora?"

"I fear nothing," replied Consuelo, with a mingled feeling of tenderness and pride for the unknown, "since I am under the protection of monsieur. But, my poor Karl," she added, "is there no danger for you?"

Karl shrugged his shoulders as he kissed Consuelo's hand, then ran to harness the horse, and Consuelo immediately set off across the fields with her taciturn protector.

The night grew darker and darker; the wind kept rising, and our two fugitives had continued walking with difficulty for

more than half an hour, now upon stony paths, now amidst the briars and long grass, when the rain suddenly began to fall with extraordinary violence. As yet, Consuelo had not said a word to her companion, but seeing that he was growing anxious for her, and was seeking a shelter, she said—

"Fear nothing for me, monsieur; I am strong, and am only grieved to see you expose yourself to such fatigue and anxiety for a person who is nothing to you, and who knows not how to thank you."

The unknown made a gesture of joy, as he perceived an abandoned hovel, in a corner of which he succeeded in placing his companion under cover from the torrents of rain. The roof of this ruin had been removed, and the space protected by a recess in the masonry was so small, that unless he placed himself close to Consuelo, the unknown was forced to remain in the rain. Nevertheless, he respected her situation so far as to withdraw from her that he might remove all fear. But Consuelo could not long endure to accept such self-denial. She called him to her, and seeing that he persisted in remaining where he was, she quitted the shelter herself, saying, in a tone which she intended should be joyous—

"Every one in his turn, monsieur le chevalier. I can well afford to get wet. You shall go and take my place since you refuse to share it with me."

The chevalier wished to re-conduct Consuelo to that place which was the object of so generous a dispute; but she resisted him.

"No," said she, "I will not yield. I see well that I offended you to-day by expressing a desire to quit you at the frontier. I ought to expiate my fault; I hope it will cost me a good cold."

The chevalier yielded, and placed himself in shelter. Consuelo, feeling that she owed him reparation, placed herself at his side, though she was humiliated at the idea of appearing to make him advances; but she preferred rather to appear light than ungrateful, and resigned herself, in expiation of her fault. The unknown understood this so well, that he remained as far from her as the space of two or three square feet would allow. Leaning upon the rubbish, he even affected to turn away his head, that he might not embarrass her, or seem to be emboldened by her care for him.

Consuelo was delighted that a man condemned to silence, and who condemned her to the same up to a certain point, should understand her so well, and at the same time make himself understood. Every moment increased her esteem for him, and this singular esteem made her heart beat so violently that she could scarcely breathe. At the end of a quarter of an hour, the heavy shower so far subsided as to allow our two travellers to return to their road, but the paths, soaked through, had become almost impracticable for a woman. The chevalier, with his imperturbable bearing, for some moments allowed Consuelo to slip about and save herself from falling at each step by clinging to him. But suddenly, impatient at seeing her fatigue herself, he took her in his arms, and carried her like a child. Consuelo was fascinated and over-ruled. She journeyed on through the wind and storm, carried by this gloomy chevalier, who resembled a spirit of night, and who crossed ravines and bogs, with his burden, with as rapid and assured a step as though he had been of an immaterial nature. They arrived thus at a ford of a small river; the unknown sprung into the water, lifting Consuelo higher and higher in his arms, in proportion as the ford became deeper.

Unfortunately, this water-spout of rain, so heavy and sudden, had swollen the course of the rivulet, till it had become a torrent, which now, troubled and covered with foam, ran on with a gloomy and sinister murmur. The chevalier was already up to the waist in water, and in the effort he made to keep Consuelo above the surface, it was to be feared that his feet, sunk deep in the mud, might fail him. Consuelo was alarmed for his safety. "Suffer me to drop," she said; "I know how to swim. In the name of Heaven, set me down! The water continues swelling; you will be drowned!"

At this moment a furious gust of wind struck one of the trees upon the shore, towards which our travellers were directing their steps, which, dragging with it an enormous mass of earth and stones, for a moment opposed a natural dyke to the violence of the current. Fortunately the tree had fallen above them in the stream, and the unknown had just began to breathe, when the water, forcing itself a passage through the obstacles which opposed it, flowed in so powerful a current that it was almost impossible to struggle

against it. He stopped, and Consuelo tried to disengage herself from his arms.

"Let me go," said she; "I will not be the cause of your death! I also have strength and courage! Let me struggle through the water with you."

But the chevalier pressed her to his heart with renewed energy. One would have thought that he meant to perish there with her. She felt afraid of his black mask, of this silent man, who, like the Ondines of ancient German ballads, seemed desirous to draw her beneath the gulf. She dared no further resist. For more than a quarter of an hour longer, the unknown combated against the fury of wind and waves, with a cool determination truly frightful, ever supporting Consuelo above the water, and gaining one foot of ground in four or five minutes. He reflected upon his situation with calmness. It was as difficult to recede as to advance; he had passed the deepest part, and felt, that in the movement he must make to return, the water might overpower his resistance and deprive him of his footing. At last he reached the shore, and advanced without permitting Consuelo to walk, and without even stopping to take breath, until he heard the whistle of Karl, who was anxiously awaiting them. Then he deposited his precious burden in the arms of the deserter, and fell senseless to the ground. His breathing only escaped in heavy sobs; it seemed as though his chest would burst.

"Oh, Karl, he is dying!" said Consuelo, throwing herself upon the chevalier. "See! it is the death-rattle! Take off this mask, it stifles him——"

Karl was about to obey, but the unknown, with difficulty raising his icy hand, stopped that of the deserter.

"Right," said Karl, "my oath! Signora, I have sworn that even should he be dying before your eyes, I would not touch his mask. Run to the carriage, signora, bring me my flask of brandy, which is on the box; a few drops will revive him."

Consuelo endeavoured to rise, but the chevalier detained her. If he were to die he desired to die at her feet.

"Still right," said Karl, who, spite of his rude exterior understood the mysteries of love! (he also had loved!) "you will take better care of him than I can. I will go and fetch the flask. Stay, signora," he added, in a whisper; "I

believe if you love him a little, and have the charity to tell him so, he will not allow himself to die. Without that, I will not answer for it."

Karl departed, smiling. He did not altogether share in the terror of Consuelo; he saw that the oppression of the chevalier already began to subside. But Consuelo, terrified, and believing that she was about to behold the last moments of this generous man, exclaimed—

"Oh, take this off! I will not look at you, I will withdraw; at least you will then be able to breathe."

The unknown took both Consuelo's hands, and placed them upon his heaving breast, as much that he might feel their soft warmth, as to take away her desire of relieving him by removing the mask. At this moment she remembered what Karl had said to her in a half playful, half tender manner.

"Do not die," she exclaimed to the unknown, "oh! do not die; do you not feel that I love you?"

She had no sooner said these words, than she thought she had said them in a dream. But they had escaped her lips spite of herself. The chevalier had heard them. He made an effort to rise, fell upon his knees, and embraced those of Consuelo, who melted into tears, she knew not why. Karl returned with his flask. The chevalier refused this favourite specific of the deserter, and leaning upon him, reached the carriage, where Consuelo seated herself at his side. She was very uneasy at the probable consequences of his wet clothes.

"Fear nothing, signora," said Karl. "M. le chevalier has not had time to get chilled. I will wrap him in my cloak, which I took care to put into the carriage when I saw the rain coming, for I feared one of you would get wet. When thick dry clothes are put over wet ones, heat may for some time be preserved. It is like being in a warm bath, and that is not unhealthy."

"But do you, Karl, do the same," said Consuelo; "take my cloak, for you have got wet in attending to us."

"Oh! I," said Karl, "my skin is thicker than yours. Put your cloak also upon the chevalier; wrap him up well, and even if I kill this poor horse, I will conduct you to the relay without being frozen by the way."

For an hour Consuelo held the unknown in her arms. At

times she examined his brow, warming it with her breath, that the perspiration with which it was bathed might not grow chill. When the carriage stopped, he pressed her to his heart with a strength which clearly proved that he was in the fulness of life and happiness, then hastily let down the step, and disappeared.

Consuelo found herself beneath a species of cart-shed, face to face with an old servant, half peasant, half waiter, who carried a dark lantern, and who conducted her by a path bordered with hedges, passed a house of mediocre appearance, to a pavilion, of which he closed the door behind her, having first made her enter without him. Seeing a second door open, she penetrated into a little suite of apartments, very clean and simple, composed of two rooms; a well-warmed bed-chamber, with a good bed standing ready, and another room, lighted with wax candles and supplied with a comfortable supper. She remarked with sorrow that there was but one cover; and when Karl came to bring her parcels and offer his services at table, she dared not tell him that all she desired was the company of her protector to supper.

"Go, eat and sleep yourself, my good Karl," said she; "I want for nothing. You must be more tired than I."

"I am no more tired than if I had just come from saying my prayers by the corner of the fire with my poor wife, to whom may God give peace! Oh! how I kissed the ground just now when I found myself out of Prussia, though I know not if we are in Saxony, Bohemia, Poland, or China, as they say at M. le Comte Hoditz's at Roswald."

"But how is it possible, Karl, that travelling upon the box of the carriage, you did not recognise one of the places we have passed?"

"Apparently, because I have never come this way before, signora; moreover, I know not how to read what is written upon the walls and posts; in short, we stopped at no town or village, but always changed horses in some wood, or the court-yard of some private house. Then there is a fourth reason, which is that I gave my word of honour to monsieur le chevalier not to tell you, signora."

"You should have begun with that reason, Karl; I should have made no further objection. But tell me, does the chevalier appear to be ill?"

"Not at all, signora; he comes and goes in the house, where, truly, he does not seem to me to have much to do, for I see no one here but an old talkative gardener."

"Go, then, and offer your services to him, Karl. Run and leave me."

"But what shall I do? He has refused them, ordering me to wait only on you."

"Well, wait upon yourself, then, my friend, and pleasant dreams to you upon your liberty."

Consuelo went to bed with the first dawn of morning; and when she had risen and dressed, her watch showed her that it was two o'clock. The day was clear and brilliant. She tried to open the blinds, but in both apartments found them closed by a secret spring, like those of the postchaise in which she had travelled. She then endeavoured to go out; the doors were bolted on the outside. She returned to the window, and distinguished a small meadow. Nothing announced the vicinity of a town or frequented road. The silence in the house was complete; outside it was only interrupted by the hum of insects, the cooing of pigeons on the roof, and from time to time by the plaintive sounds of a wheelbarrow in the garden-walks, to which her eye could not reach. She listened mechanically to these sounds, agreeable to an ear so long deprived of the echoes of rustic life. Consuelo was still a prisoner, and the care which was taken to hide her situation from her caused her some uneasiness. But she was resigned for some time to a captivity the appearance of which had in it so little that was harsh, and the love of the chevalier did not cause her the same horror as that of Mayer had done.

Though the faithful Karl had recommended her to ring as soon as she should be up, she was unwilling to disturb him, judging that he had need of longer repose than herself. She feared above all to wake her other travelling companion, whose fatigue must, she thought, be excessive. She passed into the neighbouring apartment, and instead of the repast of the preceding evening, which had been removed without her perceiving it, she found the table covered with books and implements of writing.

The books tempted her but little; she was too much agitated to make use of them, and as in the midst of her perplexities she found an irresistible pleasure in retracing

the events of the preceding night, she made no effort to abstract her thoughts. By degrees the idea occurred to her, since she was still retained in secret confinement, to continue her journal, and by way of preamble she wrote this page upon a single leaf.

"Dear Beppo, it is for you alone I renew the recital of my strange adventures. Accustomed to speak to you with that freedom which conformity of age and similarity of ideas inspire, I can confide to you emotions which my other friends might not understand, and which, doubtless, they would judge more severely. This beginning will make you guess that I do not feel myself exempt from faults; I am convicted of them in my own eyes, though at present I am ignorant of their tendency and results.

"Joseph, before telling you how I escaped from Spandau (which, in fact, is nothing to me in comparison with what now occupies my thoughts), I must tell you —— how can I tell you? I know not myself! Am I dr aming? Yet I feel my breast heave, and my heart tremble, as though it would quit my bosom to mingle with another soul. Stay, I will tell you all simply, for all is comprised in one word; dear friend, I love!

"I love one unknown, a man whose voice I have never heard. You will think me mad, and with good reason. Is not love a serious madness? Listen, Joseph, and do not doubt my happiness, which surpasses all the illusions of my first love at Venice, a happiness so intoxicating that it prevents me from feeling shame at having so quickly and foolishly accepted it, spares me the fear that I have bestowed my affection unworthily, and removes all doubt of its not being returned. Oh! this is because I am loved, I feel it so well! Be assured that I am not deceived, and that I love this time truly, dare I say wildly? Why not? Love comes to us from God. It does not depend upon ourselves to kindle it in our bosoms as we kindle a torch at the altar. All my endeavours to love Albert (he whose name I no longer trace but with trembling) failed in lighting this ardent and sacred flame; since I have lost him I have loved his remembrance better than I ever loved his person. Who knows how I might now love him if he could be restored to me!"

Scarcely had Consuelo traced these last words than she

effaced them, not sufficiently perhaps to prevent their being still read, but enough to do away with the terror of having had them in her thoughts. She was greatly excited; and the truth of her love was betrayed, spite of herself, in her most secret thoughts. She tried in vain to continue writing, that she might thus explain to herself the mystery of her own heart. She found no expression by which to render the shades of feeling affecting her, but those terrible words, "Who knows how I might love Albert now if he could be restored to me?"

Consuelo knew not how to deceive herself; she had believed in her love for the memory of a dead man; but now life was glowing in her bosom, and a real passion annihilated an imaginary one.

She tried to read what she had just written, that she might calm her troubled spirit. As she did so she found nothing but disorder, and despairing of sufficient calm to continue, feeling likewise that the effort produced fever, she crumpled the written sheet in her hand, and threw it upon the table, till she should have an opportunity of burning it. Trembling like one guilty, her face flushed, she walked up and down with agitation, no longer conscious of anything, but that she loved, and that it no more depended upon herself to doubt it.

Some one knocked at the door of her bedchamber, and opening it, Karl appeared. His face was flushed, his eye disturbed, his jaw heavy. She thought him ill with fatigue, but quickly understood from his replies that he had made somewhat too free, on his arrival in the morning, with the wine and beer of his hospitable entertainer. This was Karl's sole fault. A certain quantity rendered him confiding to excess; anything more might render him terrible. Fortunately he had confined himself to the dose of confidingness and benevolence, and the effects of it still remained with him, even after having slept the whole day. He raved of monsieur le chevalier; he could not speak of anything else. Monsieur le chevalier was so good, so humane, had so little pride with poor people! He had made Karl sit down *vis-à-vis* with him, instead of allowing him to serve at table, and he had forced him to share his repast, giving him his best wine, knocking glasses with him each time, and drinking glass for glass like a true Sclavonian.

"What a pity he is only an Italian," said Karl; "he deserves to be a Bohemian; he carries his wine as well as myself."

"Perhaps that is not saying much," replied Consuelo, but little pleased with the aptitude of the chevalier to drink with valets. But she immediately reproached herself with looking upon Karl as inferior to herself or her friends, after the services he had rendered them. Moreover, it was beyond doubt that he might hear her spoken of that the chevalier had sought the society of this devoted servant. Karl's conversation showed her that she was not deceived.

"Oh, signora!" he continued, artlessly, "this worthy young man is madly in love with you; he would commit crimes, even meannesses, for your sake!"

"I can dispense with his doing that," replied Consuelo, to whom these expressions were displeasing, though, doubtless, Karl did not understand their full force. "Can you explain to me," she continued, "why I am so closely confined here?"

"Oh! as for that, signora, even if I knew, I would rather cut my tongue out than tell you; for I have given my word of honour to the chevalier not to answer any of your questions."

"Thank you, Karl! Then you love the chevalier better than you love me?"

"Oh, no! I did not say that; but as he proved to me that it is for your interest, I ought to serve you in spite of yourself."

"How did he prove it to you?"

"I know not; but I am quite convinced. In the same way, signora, he has charged me to lock you up, to watch over you; in one word, to keep you a prisoner, and in confinement, until we shall have arrived at our destination."

"We do not remain here, then?"

"We depart at night. We shall travel no longer by day, that you may not be fatigued, and for other reasons which I know not."

"And you are to be my jailer! all this time?"

"As you say, signora have I sworn it upon the Testament."

"Monsieur le chevalier is amusing himself: but I must make up my mind to submit to you rather than to M. Schwartz, Karl."

"And I will take better care of you," replied Karl, laughing with a good-humoured air. "By way of beginning, signora, I am going to prepare your dinner."

"I am not hungry, Karl."

"Oh! that is impossible; you must dine, and make a good dinner too, signora, such are my orders; 'such are my orders,' as Maître Schwartz says."

"If you imitate him in every way you will not at least oblige me to dine. It was very easy to make me pay on the morrow for the dinner of the preceding day which he had conscientiously preserved."

"That was his way of doing business. Mine is different. The profits concern monsieur le chevalier. He is not avaricious; he gives gold liberally. He must be famously rich, or else his fortune will not go far."

Consuelo caused a light to be brought, and retired into the neighbouring apartment to burn her writing. But she sought for it in vain; it was nowhere to be found.

CHAPTER XIX.

A FEW moments after Karl returned with a letter, the handwriting of which was unknown to Consuelo, and of which the following is nearly the contents:—

"I quit you, perhaps never to see you again. I give up three days which might still have been passed near you, three such days as in all probability I shall never again spend in the whole course of my life! I renounce them voluntarily. It is a duty. You will one day appreciate the holiness of my sacrifice.

"Yes, I love you, I love you wildly! and yet I know no more of you than you know of me. Do not thank me, then, for anything I have done for you. I have only obeyed supreme orders, I have only accomplished the duties of my charge. Remember only the love I bear you, and which I can only prove by departing. This love is as respectful as it is deep. It will be as lasting as it has been sudden and unlooked-for. I have scarcely seen your features, I know

nothing of your life; but I feel that my soul is yours, and that I can never withdraw it from you. I go with my heart full of pride, joy, and bitterness. You love me! How shall I support the idea of losing you, if the terrible will which governs you and me shall condemn me to this? I know not. Yet at this moment I cannot be unhappy; in spite of my fears I am too completely intoxicated with your love and my own to suffer. Adieu! it may be an eternal adieu! And yet, according to the world, I am free, and as it seems to me, you are free also. I can never love any other than you, and do you take care that you love not another. But our fate is no longer in our own hands. I am bound by eternal vows, as you doubtless will shortly be; at least, you are in the power of the Invisibles, and it is a power without appeal. Adieu, then, my heart is breaking; but God will give me strength to accomplish this sacrifice, and one yet more rigorous, if any such exist. Adieu! adieu! Oh, God, have mercy upon me!"

This letter, without signature, was written in a disguised or trembling hand.

"Karl!" cried Consuelo, pale and agitated, "is it the chevalier who gave you this?"

"Yes, signora."

"And he wrote it himself?"

"Yes, signora, and not without difficulty. His right hand is wounded."

"Wounded, Karl? seriously?"

"Perhaps. The wound is deep, though he does not seem to think much about it."

"But how did he get thus wounded?"

"Last night, when we were changing horses, before we gained the frontier, the near horse wanted to be off before the postillion had mounted. You were alone in the carriage; the postillion and I were four or five paces off. The chevalier held the horse with the strength of a lion, for it was a terrible animal."

"Oh! yes; I felt some violent concussion. But you told me it was nothing."

"I did not see that monsieur le chevalier had wounded the back of his hand against one of the buckles of the harness."

"Always serving me? And tell me, Karl, has the chevalier quitted the house?"

"Not yet, signora; but they are saddling his horse, and I have just made up his portmanteau. He says you have nothing to fear now; and the person who is to take his place near you has already arrived. I hope we shall see the chevalier again before long, for it would grieve me very much if I thought otherwise. Still he will promise nothing, and to all my questions replies, 'Perhaps!'"

"Karl, where is the chevalier?"

"I do not know, signora. His room is near here. Shall I tell him from you——"

"Tell him nothing; I will write to him. No; tell him that I desire to thank him, to see him for a moment. Go, make haste, I fear he is already gone."

Karl went out, and Consuelo immediately repented having entrusted him with this message. She said to herself that if the chevalier had only kept close to her during the journey, in cases of absolute need, it was doubtless because he had engaged to do so with the singular and dreaded Invisibles. She determined to write to him; but scarcely had she traced and then effaced a few words, when a slight noise made her raise her eyes. Then she saw sliding aside a panel in the wainscot, which formed a secret door of communication with the closet where she had written and a neighbouring apartment, doubtless that occupied by the chevalier. The wainscot, however, was only withdrawn far enough to allow passage to a gloved hand, which seemed to invite that of Consuelo. She sprung forward, and seizing the hand, said, "The other hand, the wounded hand!" The unknown drew on one side of the panel so as not to be seen, and passed his right hand through, which Consuelo took possession of, and hastily unfastening the bandage, saw a wound which was indeed deep. She pressed it to her lips, and covered it with her handkerchief; then drawing from her bosom the little filigree cross, which she so superstitiously cherished, she placed it in the beautiful hand, whose whiteness was enhanced by the purple blood.

"Stay," said she, "here is the most precious thing I possess in this world; it is the legacy of my mother, my amulet, which has never quitted me. I have never loved anyone well enough to confide the treasure to him. Keep it till we meet again."

The unknown drew Consuelo's hand behind the wainscot,

and covered it with kisses and tears. Then at the noise of Karl approaching, who was coming to deliver his message, he thrust it back, and hastily closed the panel. Consuelo heard the drawing of a bolt. She listened in vain, hoping to detect the voice of the unknown. Either they spoke low, or had withdrawn.

Karl returned to Consuelo a few moments later.

"He is gone, signora," he said, sadly; "gone, without bidding you good-bye, and filling my pockets with I know not how many ducats, for the unforeseen wants of our journey, as he said, seeing that the regular expenses are at the charge of those—no matter who. There is yonder a little man in black, who does but barely unclose his teeth, and gives his commands in a clear dry tone, which does not suit me at all; it is he who has taken the place of the chevalier, and I shall have the honour of his company on the box, which does not promise much for a very agreeable conversation. The poor chevalier! Pray Heaven, he may be restored to us."

"But are we then obliged to follow this little man in black?"

"They can no longer oblige us, signora; but the chevalier made me swear that I will obey this man as I would himself. Come, signora, here is your dinner. You must not despise it; it looks tempting. We depart to-night, to stop only when they please, as I said just now."

Consuelo, alarmed and overcome, listened no longer to Karl's griefs. As regarded her journey and the fresh guide, she no longer felt any uneasiness. Everything became indifferent to her from the moment the beloved unknown had abandoned her. A prey to a profound silence, she mechanically tried to please Karl by tasting some of the viands. But being more inclined to weep than to eat, she asked for a cup of coffee, to give her at least somewhat of physical courage and strength. The coffee was brought.

"Stay, signora," said Karl, "the little gentleman insisted upon preparing it himself, that it might be excellent. He looks to me like an old *valet-de-chambre*, or a *maître-d'hôtel*, and after all he is not so bad as he seems; indeed, I think he is at heart a good fellow, though he does not like talking. He has made me drink some brandy at least a hundred years old, the best I ever tasted. If you would like to try a little,

it will do you more good than this coffee, however stimulating it may be."

"My good Karl, go and drink whatever you like, but leave me in peace," said Consuelo, swallowing her coffee, the quality of which she no longer thought of appreciating.

Scarcely had she risen from the table, when she felt herself overpowered by an extraordinary drowsiness. When Karl came to tell her that the carriage was ready, he found her asleep in the chair.

"Give me your arm," she said to him, "I cannot support myself. I believe I have a fever."

She was so overpowered that she did but indistinctly perceive the carriage, her new guide, and the porter of the house, whom Karl could not persuade to accept anything for himself. As soon as they had started, she fell fast asleep. The carriage was arranged and provided with cushions like a bed. From this moment Consuelo lost all consciousness. She knew not how long the journey lasted; she did not even observe whether it were day or night, whether she halted or continued her way uninterruptedly. She perceived Karl once or twice at the door, but understood neither his questions nor his alarm; it seemed to her that the little man felt her pulse, and made her swallow a restorative, saying, "It is nothing; madame is going on very well." She felt a sort of vague uneasiness, an insurmountable prostration of strength. Her heavy eyelids would scarcely allow her to see, and her thoughts were not sufficiently clear to take account of the objects which struck her sight. The more she slept, the more she desired to sleep. She did not even think of asking if she were ill, and she could only keep repeating her last words to Karl, "Leave me in peace, my good Karl." At last she felt somewhat relieved in body and mind, and looking around her, saw that she was lying in an excellent bed, between vast curtains of white satin and gold fringe. Her little travelling companion, wearing a black mask like the chevalier, made her smell a bottle which appeared to dissipate the clouds from her mind, and give place to the light of day instead of the fog with which she had been enveloped.

"Are you a physician, monsieur?" she said, at last, with some effort.

"Yes, madame la comtesse, I have that honour," he replied, in a voice which did not seem altogether unknown to her.

"Have I been ill?"

"Only slightly indisposed. You find yourself much better now?"

"I am quite well, and I thank you for your cares."

"I present my duty to you, and will appear no more before your highness, unless illness should make you recall me."

"Have I arrived at the end of my journey?"

"Yes, madame."

"Am I at liberty, or am I a prisoner?"

"You are at liberty, madame la comtesse, within the boundaries reserved for your occupation."

"I understand, I am in a large and handsome prison," said Consuelo, looking round her vast well-lighted chamber, hung with white damask ornamented in gold, and relieved with magnificent gilt and sculptured wainscoting. "Can I see Karl?"

"I know not, madame, I am not the master here. I must retire; you have no longer need of my skill, and it is forbidden me to yield to the pleasure of conversation with you."

The man in black went out, and Consuelo, still weak and languid, tried to rise. The only dress she could find was a long robe in white woollen stuff, of a marvellously fine texture, resembling the tunic of a Roman lady. She took it up, and from its folds fell a billet, on which was written in letters of gold, "This is the spotless robe of the neophyte. If your soul be sullied, this noble garment of innocence will be to you the devouring tunic of Dejanira."

Consuelo, accustomed to peace of conscience (perhaps, to too profound a peace), smiled, and put on the beautiful robe with unaffected pleasure. She picked up the billet, that she might read it once more, and thought its emphatic style puerile. Then she drew near to a rich toilette of white marble, which supported a large glass, framed in gold scrolls of exquisite taste. But her attention was attracted by an inscription placed in the ornament which crowned this mirror, "If your soul be as pure as my crystal, you will see yourself eternally young and handsome, but if vice have tarnished your heart, fear to find in me a severer reflection of your moral ugliness."

"I have never been either beautiful or guilty," thought Consuelo, "therefore this glass will lie in both cases."

She looked in it fearlessly, and found that she was not ugly. This beautiful flowing dress, and her long loose black hair, gave her the appearance of an ancient priestess: but her extreme paleness struck her greatly. Her eyes were less pure and brilliant than usual.

"Have I grown ugly?" thought she, "or does the mirror accuse me?"

She opened a drawer in the toilette-table, and found in it, among a thousand *recherché* luxuries, several objects, accompanied with devices at once simple and pedantic; a pot of rouge, with these words engraved on the cover, "Fashion and falsehood! Paint gives not back to the cheek the freshness of innocence, and fails to efface the ravages of disorder;" exquisite perfumes, with this device upon the bottle, "A soul without faith and an indiscreet mouth are like open bottles, whose precious essence is spoiled or spilt;" and at last some white ribbons, with these words embroidered in gold, "For the pure brow, sacred fillets; for the head heaped with infamy, the rope, the punishment of slaves."

Consuelo gathered her hair together, and arranged it, after the ancient manner, in these fillets. Then she curiously examined the strange enchanted palace into which her romantic destiny had led her. She passed through the curious rooms of her rich and vast apartments. A library, a music room, filled with the most perfect instruments, and numerous scarce and precious manuscripts; a delicious boudoir, a small gallery ornamented with superb pictures and charming statues. It was a lodging worthy of a queen for its richness, of an artist for its taste, and of a nun for its chasteness. Consuelo, bewildered with this sumptuous and delicate hospitality, reserved the examination in detail of the symbols hidden in the choice of books, the objects of art, and the pictures which decorated this sanctuary. The curiosity to know in what spot of the world this marvellous residence was situated, made her abandon the interior for the exterior. She approached a window, but before raising a blind which covered it, she read yet another sentence—

"If an evil thought be in your heart, you are not worthy to contemplate the divine spectacle of nature. If virtue reside in your soul, look and bless God, who opens to you the gate of a terrestrial Paradise."

She hastened to open the window, to see if the aspect of

the country agreed with the proud promises of the inscription. It was, indeed, a terrestrial Paradise, and Consuelo thought she was dreaming. This garden, planted in the English fashion, a very rare thing at that period, but ornamented in its details with German art, presented smiling perspectives, magnificent shadows, fresh slopes, all the beauties of a natural landscape; and at the same time exquisite order, sweet and abundant flowers, fine gravel, and crystalline waters, which characterise a garden kept up with taste and intelligence. Beyond these, fine trees, forming the high barriers of a narrow valley, sown, or rather carpeted, with flowers, and intersected by graceful limpid streams, extended a sublime horizon of blue mountains, with varied crests, and imposing heights. The country was unknown to Consuelo. As far as her eye could reach, she found no indication of a landscape peculiar to Germany, where there are so many fine districts and noble mountains. Only the more advanced blossoms, and the climate, warmer than in Prussia, attested that she was somewhat nearer the south.

"Oh! my good canon, where are you?" thought Consuelo, as she contemplated the woods of white lilacs, the hedges of roses, and the ground covered with narcissus, hyacinths, and violets. Oh, Frederick of Prussia! a blessing be upon you for having taught me, by long privation and cruel sufferings, to enjoy, as I do, the delights of such a refuge! And you, all-powerful Invisible, keep me eternally in this sweet captivity; I consent to it with all my soul; above all, if the chevalier——"

Consuelo did not conclude her desire. Since she had recovered from her lethargy, she had not yet thought of the unknown. This burning remembrance awoke in her, and caused her to reflect on the meaning of the threatening words inscribed upon the walls, upon the furniture of the magic palace, and even upon the ornaments with which she had ingeniously decorated her person.

CHAPTER XX.

After so long a captivity, it was natural that an ardent and earnest desire for liberty should fill the mind of Consuelo to the exclusion of every other feeling; and, accordingly, it was with an enjoyment bordering on rapture that she hastened towards a wide sweep of pleasure-ground, to which the careful hand of art, by an ingenious disposition of clumps of trees and winding walks, had given the appearance of a still greater extent. But after a two hours' ramble she began to feel painfully impressed by the utter silence and solitude which reigned all around her. She had wandered again and again along every path without perceiving even the trace of a footstep upon the fine and newly-raked gravel. High walls, which were concealed by the thick foliage, prevented her straying beyond the immediate precincts, with every turn of which she was now thoroughly acquainted. Here and there, however, there were openings in the wall to give place to a stream of water, beyond which were seen glades and wooded hills, and an occasional turn of a gravel walk, soon lost again amid the brushwood.

From her window, the whole landscape had seemed open before her, but here, on foot, she found herself in an inclosed paddock, shut in so carefully on all sides, as to convince her that she was still a prisoner.

She returned to observe the enchanted palace where she had awoke. It was a small Italian edifice, luxuriously furnished in the interior, and elegant and beautiful in its outward aspect; with a high pointed rock rising behind it, which completed its picturesque appearance, and afforded, at the same time, as impenetrable a barrier to observation as the walls and glacis of Spandau. "My present fortress is beautiful," said Consuelo, "but, I perceive, it is only a more secluded prison."

She sat down to rest herself upon a terrace in front of the house, which was gaily decorated with vases of flowers, and a pretty fountain. It was a charming spot, and not the less lovely that the view from it embraced only the interior of a

garden, with glimpses of a wide park beyond, and high mountains, whose blue summits towered above the trees. But the care with which she was installed in this new prison filled Consuelo's mind with an instinctive fear, and she would joyfully have exchanged the blossoming catalpas, and the gaily enamelled flower-borders, for a rustic hut, rough lanes, and a wild country, which she might explore at pleasure. These high walls effectually intercepted all view of the intermediate scenery between them and the uncertain outline of the mountain range, now fast fading in the indistinctness of twilight.

The nightingales were singing most melodiously, but no sound of human voice announced the neighbourhood of any habitation. It was evident to Consuelo that the one she occupied (situated on the confines of an extensive park, and apparently of an immense forest also) appertained to a superior mansion, and belonged to the lord of the domain. The little she could see of the park served only to excite a wish to behold more. She watched through the openings in hope of seeing some one by chance walking within; but in vain; the only living creatures were the herds of deer and flocks of sheep, quietly browsing on the sides of the hills, as if the approach of man were an event unknown among them. At length the evening breeze arose, and for a moment swept aside a line of poplars that formed one boundary of the garden, and Consuelo beheld, glimmering faintly in the twilight, the white towers and pointed roofs of a castle, half screened behind a wooded upland. It was perhaps a quarter of a mile distant. Despite her determination to resist all thoughts of the chevalier, Consuelo felt persuaded that he must certainly be there, and her eyes rested eagerly on that perhaps imaginary castle, to which all approach seemed forbidden her, and whose outline, even, was being gradually withdrawn from her sight by the deepening shades of evening.

When night had fairly closed in, Consuelo perceived a stream of light from the lower windows of her pavilion spreading over the neighbouring shrubs, and she hastily descended, in the hope of seeing at length a human countenance in her dwelling. She had not that pleasure. The face of the servant, whom she found lighting the candle and preparing supper, was covered with a black mask similar to the

doctor's, and which appeared to be the uniform of the Invisibles.

He was an old man, with a wig as smooth and stiff as if it had been made of brass, and dressed in a complete suit of the colour of the tomata.

"I humbly ask pardon of madame for appearing in this guise," said he, in a hesitating manner; "I act according to orders which I do not pretend to understand. I hope madame will have the goodness to accustom herself to my appearance, without allowing me to inspire her with fear. I am entirely at madame's command. My name is Matteus: I am, at the same time, keeper in this pavilion, gardener, cook, and valet. I understand that madame has travelled a good deal, and is accustomed to dispense with much attendance; for instance, she will perhaps not require the aid of a waiting-woman. I should find it difficult to procure one, and the servants at the castle are forbidden to come here. But a maid-servant will attend every morning to assist me with the house-work, and a youth will be here occasionally to water the flowers and attend to the garden walks. I have humbly to make an observation to madame upon this subject; it is, that any servant, other than myself, to whom she is even suspected to have spoken, or made signs, will instantly be dismissed; which will be a great misfortune to them, for this is a comfortable place, where obedience is liberally rewarded. Madame is too generous and too just, I am sure, to expose these poor people——"

"Pray make yourself quite easy on that point," said Consuelo; "I should not be rich enough to repay them for such a loss, neither would it ever be my inclination to turn any one aside from their duty."

"Besides, I shall never lose sight of them," said Matteus, as if speaking to himself.

"You may spare yourself all trouble on that head. I am under too much obligation to those who have brought me here, and I think also to those who have received me, to attempt anything which might be displeasing to them."

"Ah! madame is here by her own consent?" asked Matteus, in whom curiosity did not seem to be repressed equally with his communicative powers.

"I beg you will consider me as a voluntary captive upon parole."

"Oh, yes! that is just what I imagined. I have never received any one on any other terms, though I have often seen my prisoners on parole weep and distress themselves, as if they sadly regretted their engagement. And yet, Heaven knows, they were well off here! But in such cases they were always released from their promise when they asked to be so; no one is detained here by force. Madame's supper is quite ready."

The last announcement of her tomata-coloured major-domo had an immediate effect on Consuelo's appetite. She enjoyed her supper very much, and bestowed great praise on her cook for his skill. He was evidently flattered by her compliments, and Consuelo saw that she had risen greatly in his estimation; still he was not the less reserved and circumspect. He was a well-disposed man with a mixture of simplicity and shrewdness in his character which Consuelo at once detected, from observing the good-humoured address with which he foresaw and parried all the inquiries she would be likely to make, and provided such answers as he thought suitable. Thus he forestalled all questions without affording her much information.

"His masters," he said, "were rich and powerful people, generous in the extreme, but very severe, particularly as regarded discreetness. The pavilion formed part of a handsome residence, sometimes occupied by his masters, sometimes consigned to the care of confidential servants, who were well paid, and were very faithful. The country around was fertile and well cultivated, and the inhabitants well cared for by their landlords. The complaint of an inferior was a thing unknown;" and indeed Maître Matteus was not a person to receive complaints, having been himself brought up in the utmost respect for his superiors and their commands, and having the greatest dislike to idle gossip.

Consuelo was so wearied with his officious recommendations and ingenious hints, that as soon as she had finished supper, she smilingly observed to him—

"I fear that it would be an indiscretion on my part, M. Matteus, if I were to avail myself longer of the pleasure of your conversation. I shall require nothing further this evening. I will, therefore, wish you a good night."

"Madame will be so obliging as to ring for me when she requires anything?" replied he. "I live in a pretty little

hermitage underneath the rock behind this house, where I cultivate water-melons to perfection. I should be very much pleased if madame could do me the honour of inspecting them; but I am particularly forbidden to allow madame to pass out that way."

"I understand, M. Matteus; I am to walk in the garden only, and this through no discourtesy on your part, but by the wish of my hosts. I shall be careful to observe this rule."

"Especially as madame would find it difficult to open the door. It is so heavy!—and besides there is a secret spring in the lock, which would certainly hurt madame's hand, if she were not acquainted with it."

"My promise is a better dependence than all your bolts, M. Matteus. Go to sleep in peace, as, I assure you, I feel quite inclined to do."

Many days passed away without Consuelo receiving any intimation of the existence of her hosts, or beholding any face except the masked one of her servant, which might be, perhaps, for all she knew, a pleasanter object than his actual features. This worthy man waited upon her with a zeal and punctuality which she could not sufficiently commend; but he wearied her sadly by his ceaseless conversation, which she felt unwilling to check; for, as he perseveringly refused the douceurs she pressed upon him from time to time, she had no other means of testifying her gratitude to him, than by indulging him in his babbling propensity. He was passionately fond of the sound of his own voice, and at the same time constrained to exercise a strict guard over his words; and he had thus acquired the art of just touching upon a variety of topics, without ever allowing a hint to escape him on those subjects which were strictly confided to his secrecy. Consuelo obtained accurate information as to the precise quantity of vegetables grown each year in the castle-garden; a particular history of all the swans upon the lake, of all the pheasant-chicks in the preserve, and of all the pine-apples in the hot-house. But she could form no opinion as to what country she was in, whether the master or masters of the castle were absent or present; whether she were ever to hold communication with them, or to remain for an indefinite period in the solitude of her pavilion.

In short, not a word of anything which really interested

her escaped the prudent yet active lips of Master Matteus. She would have feared to commit a breach of trust even in going within reach of the voices of the other servants, besides that they were very matinal in their attendance, and disappeared almost as soon as she was risen. She could only glance from time to time into the park without ever perceiving any one within; or contemplate the turrets of the castle, sparingly illuminated in the evening with lights, which were extinguished at an early hour.

She soon became a victim to deep melancholy, and the *ennui* which she had so successfully combated at Spandau, now entirely overwhelmed her in this luxurious retirement. Are there any blessings in life which we can enjoy alone? No! Prolonged solitude darkens and disenchants the loveliest objects, and eventually brings terror even to the strongest heart. Consuelo began to think the hospitality of the Invisibles even more cruel than capricious, and an insupportable weariness weighed down all her faculties. Her fine pianoforte sounded too loud and brilliant for these empty and sonorous chambers, and the tones of her own voice inspired her with a kind of fear. If the shades of night surprised her whilst venturing to sing, she fancied that she heard the notes re-echoed in an angry voice, and that she could see restless and mysterious shadows gliding along the silken walls, or over the noiseless carpets, which, when she turned to look at them, disappeared behind the furniture, hiding themselves, and whispering and mocking at her. Yet there was nothing but the evening breeze playing among the foliage which screened the window-frames, or the vibrations of her own voice trembling around her. But her imagination, tired of interrogating those silent witnesses of her *ennui*, the statues, the pictures, the Chinese vases of flowers, and the clear depths of the gigantic mirrors, was now affected by a vague dread, as if with a presentiment of some extraordinary event. She recollected the strange powers attributed to the Invisibles by the vulgar, the illusions with which Cagliostro had surrounded her, the apparition of the White Lady in the palace at Berlin, the wondrous promises of the Count de St. Germain concerning the resurrection of Count Albert. She considered that all these inexplicable circumstances were doubtless attributable to the secret machinations of the Invisibles, both in society, and with respect to her own indi-

vidual fate. She did not, indeed, believe in their supernatural powers, but she reflected that their aim was ever to subjugate the minds of others by addressing themselves to the heart or the imagination, either by menaces or promises, by terror or seduction. She was then on the eve of some formidable revelation, or of some cruel mystification; and, like a timorous child, she was afraid of being frightened.

At Spandau she had steeled her mind against extreme dangers, against real suffering, and she had courageously triumphed over all; but then resignation seemed natural at Spandau. The sinister aspect of a fortress harmonises well with the sad reveries of solitude, whereas everything about her new prison seemed fitted for a life of poetical effusion or of peaceful friendship; and this eternal silence, this absence of all human sympathy, destroyed the harmony of the scene, like some monstrous incongruity. It seemed the luxurious retreat of two happy lovers, or the joyous fireside of an elegant family, suddenly hated and abandoned from some unfortunate quarrel, or some terrible catastrophe. She no longer smiled at the frequent inscriptions which decorated every ornament, as at emphatic puerilities. They contained words of encouragement mingled with threatenings, conditional terms of eulogy qualified by humiliating accusations. She could no longer raise her eyes without discovering some new sentence which she had not previously remarked: it seemed impossible to breathe freely in this atmosphere of searching and rigid justice. Her spirits had sunk entirely since the excitement of her escape and her sudden love for the unknown. The lethargy which probably had been purposely produced for the sake of concealing from her the situation of her present asylum, had left behind an oppressive languor, joined to a nervous irritability which often results from it. Thus she was always either restless or *nonchalante*, disturbed by trifles or totally indifferent to everything.

One evening she fancied she could distinguish the distant sound of music. She ascended the terrace, and perceived, through the intervening foliage, that the castle was brilliantly illuminated. The resounding and decided strains of orchestral music now distinctly reached her, and the contrast of the gay scene within the castle, with her own forlorn position, affected her more than she was willing to acknow-

ledge. It was so long since she had exchanged a word with intelligent and reasonable beings! For the first time in her life she conceived a high idea of the happiness of a concert or a ball, and like Cinderella, she wished that some good fairy would transport her through the air into this enchanted palace, even though she were to remain invisible, so that she might but enjoy the sight of an assembly of human beings all animated with pleasure. The moon was not yet risen. Though the sky was clear, yet there was so thick a mist among the trees, that Consuelo could easily have passed through them without being seen, even had she been surrounded by invisible spies. A strong temptation presented itself, and all the specious arguments which curiosity never fails to suggest when it would assail the conscience, came crowding to her mind. Was it treating her with confidence to bring her, thus asleep and senseless, into this stern though gilded prison? Had anyone a right to exact such blind obedience, without deigning even to request it? Besides, after all, this appearance of festivity might be intended as a lure to attract her? Who could tell? Everything connected with the conduct of the Invisibles was so extraordinary. Perhaps, on attempting to pass out of the enclosure, she might find the door ready open, or a gondola awaiting her upon the stream which led from her garden to the park. She seized on this idea, certainly the most improbable of any, and descended to the garden, determined to tempt the adventure. She had scarcely advanced fifty yards when she heard a wizzing noise in the air, as if a monstrous bird were flying swiftly past her. At the same moment she found herself surrounded by a blue light, which quickly vanished, and then it suddenly re-appeared, accompanied by a loud report. Consuelo soon comprehended that this was neither a meteor nor a thunderbolt, but simply a commencement of fireworks at the castle. This entertainment of the host's would afford her a beautiful spectacle from the terrace, and she hurriedly retraced her steps towards the pavilion, like an imprisoned child in sight of an amusement. But twice, by the flashes of various-coloured light which had streamed across the garden, she had seen the tall dark figure of a man standing motionless at her side; and before she had time to look at him, the luminous bomb, descending in a sparkling shower of fire, died away, and left

all objects buried in profound obscurity, but the more impenetrable to eyes which had been thus for an instant dazzled. Each time had the terrified girl rushed forward in an opposite direction from the one where she had seen the spectre; yet on the return of the fearful light, there he was, still only two paces from her. The third time she had just reached the terrace-steps, he was before her, as if to dispute her passage. Overcome with terror, she uttered a piercing cry, and, tottering, would have fallen, had not the mysterious visitor caught her in his arms. But no sooner did she feel the pressure of his lips upon her brow, than she instantly recognised the chevalier, the unknown, the being that she loved, and by whom also she knew herself to be beloved.

CHAPTER XXI.

The joy she felt at finding him thus restored to her, as an angel of consolation, in the midst of this oppressive solitude, at once silenced all the fears and scruples which had filled her mind but the instant before, when without the hope of meeting him, his image had still occupied her thoughts; and as he gently endeavoured to disengage himself, that he might pick up his black mask, which had fallen down, she cried, "Ah, do not leave me! Do not abandon me!" Her supplicating tone was irresistible. The unknown threw himself at her feet, and hiding his face in the folds of her dress, which he fondly pressed to his lips, he remained a moment as if agitated by conflicting emotions of despair and rapture; then, hastily replacing his mask, and at the same time sliding a letter into Consuelo's hand, he sprang into the pavilion and disappeared, without her having seen his features.

Following, by the light of a small alabaster lamp, which was placed every evening at the foot of the staircase by Matteus, she hoped to overtake him, but ere she had half ascended, he was already out of sight. She sought in vain through every part of the pavilion; there was no trace of him; and had it not been for the letter which she held in her trembling hand, she might have thought it all a dream. At

length she resolved to return to her boudoir, and peruse the letter. This time she thought the writing rather purposely disguised, than affected by suffering or feebleness. Its contents were nearly as follows:—

"I may neither see you nor speak to you; but, at least, I am not forbidden to write to you. Will you permit me to do so? And will you venture to reply to the unknown? Oh! if I might have that happiness, I could always find your letters, and replace them with mine, during your sleep, in a book which you could leave every evening on the bank of the stream in the garden. I love you devotedly, passionately, madly! I shall be lost, I shall be wretched; nay, all activity, all zeal, all enthusiasm for the work to which I have bound myself, yes, even the voice of duty, will die within me if you love me not! Bound by an oath to strange and terrible duties, and to the entire subjection of my own will to that of others, I see before me only the choice of infamy or suicide! If you should escape from your prison, I would follow you to the end of the world, though a life of remorse and shame should expiate the happiness of seeing you! Should you refuse to join the cause of the Invisibles, if the vows, which they will seek to exact from you, should alarm and disgust you, I should be forbidden ever to see you more! But I would not, I could not, yield obedience to that command! No! I have suffered enough; I have laboured enough; I have done sufficient for the cause of humanity. If you are not to be the reward of my exertions, I will renounce them all! I will return to the world, and in its laws and customs lose all sense of my individual existence. Ah! you see my reason is troubled. Oh, pity me! Say not that you have ceased to love me! I could not bear it; I could not believe it; or, believing it, I must die!"

Consuelo read this note amidst the noise of cannon and of fireworks, which filled the air without her being aware of it. Though entirely absorbed by what she was reading, the explosions produced that electrical effect which the report of firearms, and indeed, almost every kind of violent noise, induces upon delicate and sensitive organisations. Weak and nervous temperaments are either physically affected by this influence, or painfully excited through the imagination. It has, on the contrary, a stimulating effect on the minds and feelings of vigorous and healthy constitutions.

Consuelo, perhaps, experienced this effect, even while reading the first real love-letter she had ever received. She felt her courage rise almost to rashness. Not a moment did she hesitate.

This declaration of love impressed her as warmer and more persuasive than all the words of Albert. She determined, then, to write instantly; and, while the detonating balls awoke the echoes of the park, and the stifling smell of gunpowder overpowered the perfume of the flowers, and the Bengal light illuminated the façade of the pavilion, without her even perceiving it, Consuelo replied—

"Yes, I love you! I have said it, I have owned it, and even were I to repent, were I to blush with shame at the recollection, I could never efface from the strange and incomprehensible book of my destiny that page which I traced myself, and which you have in your own hands.

"But why hide yourself thus? What terrible secrets do your mask and silence cover? Have I seen you elsewhere? Should I fear and repulse you when I learn your name, when I see your features? If you are absolutely unknown to me, as your letter states, how is it that you so blindly obey the strange rules of the Invisibles, when, nevertheless, you have this day written to me that you are ready to forswear them, and to follow me to the ends of the world? And if I were to exact, as a condition of my flight with you, that you should have no secrets from me, would you take off this mask, would you speak to me? In order to know you, then, I must engage to—— What? I must bind myself by vows to the Invisibles? But unto what work? What! must I, my eyes shut, my conscience hushed, my mind in darkness, give and abandon my will, as you have done, though you, at least, knew for what purpose? And, to encourage me to such an unheard-of act of blind devotion, you will not, even in the slightest degree, infringe the rules of your order! For, I see plainly, you belong to one of those mysterious orders, called secret societies, which are so numerous in Germany; if, indeed, it is not a political conspiracy against—— Such as they spoke of at Berlin. Well, be it what it may, if I am allowed the liberty of refusing, when I know what it is that they wish to exact from me, I will engage myself by the most solemn oaths never to reveal anything that I may have heard or seen."

Consuelo placed this letter in a book which she left in the garden, at the appointed spot; then slowly withdrew to a little distance, and hid herself among the trees, hoping to see the chevalier arrive, and trembling to leave that avowal of her most sacred sentiments where it might be found by other hands. However, as time wore on, and no one appeared, she remembered the words of the unknown, "I will fetch your letter during your sleep." She determined to conform in all things to his directions, and retired to her apartment, where, after much troubled musing, alternately painful and exquisitely happy, she, at length, fell asleep to the uncertain sounds of the music from the distant ball-room, and the flourish of trumpets which played during supper, afterwards exchanged for the noise of carriage-wheels, which announced at sunrise the departure of the numerous guests from the castle.

At nine o'clock in the morning our recluse entered the parlour where she took her meals, which she always found prepared with scrupulous punctuality, and with a care and attention worthy of every other characteristic of the place.

Matteus stood behind her chair, in the stolid and respectful manner habitual to him. Consuelo had just returned from the garden. The chevalier had taken the letter, for it was no longer in the book. But Consuelo had hoped to find another there from him, and she accused him of already betraying less ardour in his correspondence. She felt restless, excited, and a little impatient of the monotony of the life imposed upon her. She determined to try if she could not, by a little rebellion on her part, hasten on the slow course of events, which, she doubted not, were preparing round her.

It happened that this morning Matteus was unusually taciturn.

"Maître Matteus," said she, with a forced gaiety, "I can see, through your mask, that your eyes are heavy, and you seem fatigued; you did not sleep well, I think, last night."

"Madame does me too much honour by this raillery," replied Matteus, with some bitterness; "but as madame is so happy as to live with her face uncovered, I am enabled to see that she has herself suffered from the fatigue and sleepless night which she attributes to me."

"Your tell-tale mirrors have already informed me of that fact, Maître Matteus. I perceive that I am growing very

plain, and I suppose that I shall soon become more so, if I continue thus to be consumed by weariness."

"Is madame weary?" returned Matteus, in the same tone with which he would have said, "Did madame ring?"

"Yes, Matteus, I am terribly wearied, and I begin to find this seclusion insupportable. As I have not received the honour of a visit or letter, I presume that my guardians have forgotten me; and since you seem to be the only person who has not done so, I think I may be allowed to tell you that I begin to find my position equally embarrassing and extraordinary."

"I cannot permit myself to judge of madame's position, but I think it is not very long since madame received both a visit and a letter?"

"Who can have told you such a thing, Maître Matteus?" exclaimed Consuelo, blushing.

"I could reply," said he, in a tone of affected servility, "did I not fear to offend madame, and to weary her by presuming to talk with her."

"If you were my servant, Maître Matteus, I do not know what grand airs I might give myself in speaking to you; but since I have hitherto had no other servant than myself, and that you appear to be rather my guardian than my steward, I beg that you will talk as usual, if you feel inclined to do so. You are too clever this morning to be in danger of wearying me."

"It is that madame is already too weary to be fastidious. I will inform madame, then, that there was a grand *fête* at the castle last night."

"I am aware of that; I heard the firing and the music."

"Then a person who has been strictly guarded since the arrival of madame, thought to profit by the noise and confusion, so as to enter the enclosed park, in defiance of a severe prohibition. The result has been most unfortunate; but I fear I might afflict madame by relating it."

"I think such affliction would be preferable to the weary restlessness I feel. Quick, then, tell me, M. Matteus!"

"Well, then, madame, this morning I saw the most amiable, the handsomest, the bravest, the youngest, the most generous, the noblest, the greatest of all my masters, the Chevalier de Liverani, taken to prison."

"Liverani? Who is Liverani?" cried Consuelo, much

disturbed. "To prison; the chevalier! Tell me! Oh, Heaven! Tell me, who is this chevalier? Who is this Liverani?"

"I think I have sufficiently described him to madame. I cannot tell whether madame knows little or much of him; but it is very certain that he is imprisoned in the great tower for having spoken and written to madame, and for having refused to let his highness see the answer madame sent him."

"The great tower! His highness! Is all this actually true, Matteus? Am I, indeed, in the power of a sovereign prince, who treats me as a prisoner of state, and who punishes his subjects for any appearance of interest or compassion that they may evince for me? Or, am I suffering under the caprice of some eccentric lord, who is only endeavouring to mystify and frighten me, in order to test my gratitude for the service he has rendered me?"

"I am at liberty to inform madame that she is under the care of a prince, who is not only rich and powerful, but a man of education, a philosopher."

"And the supreme head of the council of the Invisibles?" added Consuelo.

"I do not at all know what madame means," observed Matteus, with the utmost indifference. "I never heard that title included among the dignities of his highness."

"But may I not be allowed to see this prince; to throw myself at his feet; to request the liberty of this Chevalier Liverani whom I can prove to be innocent of all indiscretion?"

"I do not know; but I should think it would be a difficult matter to obtain permission. However, I have a few moments' audience of his highness every evening, in order to give him the report of madame's health and occupation, and if madame were to write, perhaps I might be able te present the petition, without its passing through the hands of secretaries."

"Dear M. Matteus, you are goodness itself; and I am sure you are in the prince's confidence. Yes, I will certainly write, since you are so generous as to interest yourself in the chevalier."

"It is true that I am more interested in him than in any one else in the world. He once saved my life at the risk of his own, during a fire; and dressed and cured my wounds,

besides replacing all the property I had lost. He sat up whole nights to attend upon me, as if he had been my servant instead of my master. Oh! what good has he not effected in this country; ay, and throughout Europe, from all I hear! He is the very best young man that ever lived, and his highness loves him as if he were his son."

"And yet his highness sends him to prison for a trifling fault!"

"Oh! madame is not aware that, in the opinion of his highness, no fault is trifling which touches upon indiscretion."

"He is a very absolute prince, then?"

"Admirably just, but terribly severe."

"And how is it that I am of any importance in his arrangements and decisions?"

"Of that I am quite ignorant, as madame may well suppose. There are always secret councils at the castle, especially when the prince takes up his abode there for a few weeks, which is an event that does not often happen. If a poor servant like myself were to presume to try to unravel them, he would very speedily be dismissed. As I am at the head of the suite attached to the house, madame may suppose that I am neither inquisitive nor inclined to gossip, otherwise——"

"I understand, M. Matteus; but would it be an indiscretion on my part to ask you if the imprisonment of the chevalier is very rigorous?"

"I should imagine it is, madame. Though I know nothing of what passes within the tower, or in the subterranean chambers. I have seen many more enter them than I have seen return. I am not aware if there is any outlet towards the forest: the park is not within my cognisance."

"You alarm me, Matteus! Is it possible that I can have been the means of bringing this estimable young man into such danger? Tell me, what is the character of the prince. Is he of a cold, or a violent temper? Are is decrees dictated by a hasty and passing anger, or by a cool and determined resolution?"

"These are details upon which I cannot enter," replied Matteus, coldly.

"Well! speak to me, at least, of the chevalier. Is he a man likely to ask and obtain pardon, or to submit to his sentence in proud silence?"

"He is affectionate and gentle, full of respect and submission to his highness. But if madame has confided any secret to him, she may set her mind at rest; he would submit to any torture, rather than reveal the confidence of another, even to his confessor."

"It is well! I will myself reveal, then, to his highness this secret which he considers of sufficient importance to arouse his anger against an innocent man. Oh! my good Matteus, could you not take my letter now directly?"

"Impossible, madame, before night-fall."

"Nevertheless, I will write immediately; perhaps some chance opportunity may occur."

Consuelo retired to her boudoir, and wrote to the anonymous prince, requesting an interview, and promising to answer with sincerity every question which he might think proper to ask her.

It was midnight when Matteus brought her the following sealed reply:—

"If you desire to address the prince, your request is madness. You will never see him; you will never know him; probably you will never even hear his name. If you wish to appear before the Council of the Invisibles, your wish shall be complied with; but reflect well on the consequences of your resolution. It will determine the future life of yourself and of another."

There were still four-and-twenty hours of patience requisite after the perusal of this letter, for Matteus declared he would as soon cut off his right hand as attempt to see his highness after midnight. At breakfast the next morning he seemed a little more communicative than usual, and Consuelo thought that she could perceive that the chevalier's imprisonment had raised a feeling of bitterness in his mind against the prince, which was disposed to vent itself in a neglect of his habitual caution. But notwithstanding this, and though she encouraged him in talking for upwards of an hour, she found at the end of it that her information was but very little advanced. Whether it was that he affected simplicity that he might study the thoughts and sentiments of Consuelo, or whether he was really ignorant on the subject of the Invisibles, and of the part his master took in their concerns, Consuelo found herself floating in a strange confusion of contradictory notions. In all matters relative to

the social position of the prince, Matteus took refuge in the impossibility of breaking the rigorous silence imposed upon him. It is true, he shrugged his shoulders whenever he spoke of this capricious injunction. He acknowledged that, for his part, he could not understand what necessity there was to wear a mask in the presence of those who had come to that pavilion at various times, and for shorter or longer periods. He must say that his master took most extraordinary caprices into his head at times, and gave himself a great deal of trouble for totally incomprehensible purposes; but all curiosity or indiscreet conjecture was paralysed in him by the fear of some terrible punishment, the nature of which he did not explain. In fact, Consuelo learnt nothing more than this: that singular occurrences took place at the castle; that the people there seldom slept during the night; that all the servants had seen ghosts; that Matteus, courageous and unprejudiced as he declared himself to be, had frequently, in the winter, during the absence of the prince, and when the castle was quite empty, encountered in the park strange figures which had made him tremble, who had entered there without any visible means, and who had gone out in the same manner. All this did not throw much light upon Consuelo's situation. She was obliged to content herself with waiting patiently till evening until she could send this second petition:—

"Whatever may be the consequences to myself, I desire, earnestly and humbly, to appear before the tribunal of the Invisibles."

The day seemed to her of intolerable length; she resolved to conquer her impatience and uneasiness by singing over all that she had composed in prison upon the sadness and the weariness of solitude; and as it grew dusk, she concluded this repetition with the sublime song of Almirena's in Handel's "Rinaldo:"—

Lascia ch'io pianga La dura sorte, E ch'io sospiri La liberta!	Ah! let me weep, My cruel fate; Ah! let me sigh For liberty!

Scarcely had she finished this air when it was taken up and repeated by a fine-toned violin outside the window, and with an expression to the full as mournful and profound as

her own. Consuelo ran instantly to the casement, but she could see no one, and the strain was dying away in the distance.

It struck her forcibly that those extraordinary tones, and that peculiar manner of playing, could belong only to Count Albert; but she rejected the idea as one of those painful and dangerous illusions which had already caused her so much suffering. She had never heard Albert play any passage of modern music, and none but a disordered mind would thus persist in conjuring up a spectre whenever the sound of a violin was heard. Nevertheless, Consuelo could not throw off the emotion she experienced, and she sank into so profound and sad a reverie, that it was nine o'clock before she remembered that Matteus had brought her neither dinner nor supper, and that she had fasted since the morning. This circumstance made her fear that Matteus, like the chevalier, had fallen a victim to the interest which he had shown her. No doubt the walls had eyes and ears. Perhaps Matteus had talked too much to her; he had evinced dissatisfaction at the chevalier's imprisonment, and that was probably sufficient to include him in the same fate. These fresh subjects of anxiety made Consuelo insensible to the cravings of hunger: however, as the evening advanced, and Matteus failed to make his appearance, she ventured to ring. No one replied. She felt very faint, and above all, exceedingly dismayed. Leaning with her head between her hands, against the window-frame, she retraced in memory all the strange incidents of her life, and felt almost inclined to ask herself, was it the recollection of reality, or only a long dream, when a hand, as cold as marble, pressed upon her head, and a low deep-toned voice pronounced these words, "Your request is granted, follow me!"

Consuelo, who had not thought of kindling a light, but who had hitherto been able perfectly to distinguish every object, now looked round to discover the person who addressed her; but she found herself suddenly encompassed by such thick darkness that the atmosphere appeared to be one solid mass, and the starlit sky a sheet of lead. With a feeling of oppression she raised her hand to her face, and found it covered with a thin but impenetrable hood, such as Cagliostro had thrown over her without her feeling it. Led by an invisible hand, she descended the stairs of the pavilion, but she soon

perceived there were many more steps than she was accustomed to, and that she was being conducted into a vault which she continued to traverse for the space of half-an-hour. Faint with hunger, fatigue, emotion, and an oppressive warmth, her steps slackened, her strength failed her, and every moment she was on the point of pleading for mercy. But a feeling of pride made her unwilling to appear to falter in her resolution, and determined her to persevere courageously. At length she arrived at the conclusion of her journey and was placed upon a seat. At the same moment she heard the muffled sound of a bell striking the hour of midnight, and at the twelfth vibration the hood was lifted from her face. For a moment she was dazzled by the blaze of lights which, placed all together against the opposite wall, represented a large flaming cross, but as her eyes became accustomed to their brilliancy, she perceived that she was in a vast Gothic hall, the vaulted roof and groined archways of which bore the appearance of a deep prison, or subterranean chapel. At the further end of this saloon, which altogether presented a very formidable aspect, she distinguished seven persons, enveloped in red cloaks, with their faces hidden under white livid masks, which gave them a truly sepulchral appearance. They were all seated behind a long black marble table. In the front of this table, and upon a lower grade, was an eighth spectre, dressed in black, but with the same white mask. Lining the walls on each side of this group, were ranged twenty cloaked figures in black masks, standing in profound silence. Consuelo turned round and saw that other black phantoms were behind her also. At each door there were two stationed with glistening swords in their hands.

Under other circumstances, Consuelo might have fancied that this gloomy ceremonial was some jest, one of those Freemasons' trials which she had heard of at Berlin. But not only did the Freemasons never erect themselves into tribunals, and arrogate the right of summoning the uninitiated before their assemblies, but she was disposed, from all the circumstances that had preceded this ceremony, to consider it serious, and even fearful. She felt that she was trembling visibly; and had it not been for the five minutes of perfect silence which elapsed, she would not have been able to compose herself sufficiently to answer any inquiries.

At length the eighth judge rose, and made a signal to the two figures who were standing, with drawn swords, on each side of Consuelo, to lead her forward to the foot of the tribunal; where she remained standing in an attitude betokening more calmness and courage than she actually felt.

"Who are you, and what do you require?" said the black figure without rising.

Consuelo remained for some moments quite confounded; at length she summoned courage to reply,

"I am Consuelo, by profession a singer, called sometimes 'La Zingarella,' sometimes 'La Porporina.'"

"Have you no other name?" urged the interrogator.

Consuelo hesitated, and then said,

"I could claim another, but I have pledged my word of honour that I will never do so."

"Dost thou hope, then, to hide anything from this tribunal? Dost thou consider thyself in the presence of common judges, elected to decide cases of common interest by laws which are equally gross and blind? Why art thou here, if thou wouldst seek to deceive us by vain subterfuge? Give us thy name, introduce thyself such as thou really art, or retire."

"You, who know who I am, know also, without doubt, that silence is my duty, and you will encourage me to persist in it."

One of the red-mantled judges, leaning forwards, made a sign to one of those in black, whereupon all the black mantles left the room, with the exception of the examiner, who still retained his place, and continued in these words—

"Countess of Rudolstadt, now that this examination is private, and that you are alone in the presence of your judges, will you deny that you are lawfully married to the Count Albert Podiebrad, called de Rudolstadt, by right of his family?"

"Before answering that question," said Consuelo, "I demand to know what authority controls me here, and by what law I am bound to acknowledge it?"

"What law wouldst thou desire to invoke? A law divine, or human? The social law would place thee again under the absolute control of Frederick II., King of Prussia, Elector of Brandenburg, from whose dominions we rescued thee, to

relieve thee from an indefinite captivity, and from dangers even more dreadful still, as thou knowest."

"I know," said Consuelo, bending on her knees, "that I am bound to you by ties of eternal gratitude. I desire, then, to invoke the divine law only; and I would pray you to define me that of gratitude. Does it command me to bless you, and to devote myself to you, from the bottom of my heart? I accept it; but if it requires me to transgress the dictates of my conscience in order to please you, ought I not to challenge its authority? Judge for yourselves."

"May you ever think and act in the world as you now speak. But the circumstances which place you under our care are exceptions from all ordinary rules. We are above all human law, as you may have discovered, from the power we exercise. We are equally independent of all worldly considerations. The prejudices of birth, of rank, and fortune, the scruples and etiquette of position, the fear of opinion, even the respect for engagements contracted under the opinions and with persons of the world; nothing of all this has any weight with us, or value in our eyes, when met together far away from mortal observation, and armed with God's sword of justice, we weigh in the hollow of our hands the toys and trifles of your timid and frivolous existence. Explain yourself, therefore, without disguise before us, who are the supports, the parents, and the living law to every independent being. We will not listen to you till we know in what quality you appear before us. Is it the Zingarella Consuelo, or the Countess de Rudolstadt, who addresses us?"

"The Countess de Rudolstadt having renounced all pretensions in society, has none to reclaim here. La Zingarella Consuelo——"

"Stop, and weigh well the words that you have just spoken. Were your husband alive, should you have the right to deprive him of your faith, to abjure his name, to refuse his fortune; in a word, to return to the condition of the Zingarella Consuelo, in order to satisfy the puerile and senseless pride of his family and his class."

"Certainly not."

"And thinkest thou that death has freed thee from all ties? Owest thou to the memory of Albert no respect, no love, no fidelity?"

Consuelo blushed and looked embarrassed, then became very pale. The idea that they were about, like Cagliostro and the Count de Saint Germain, to speak to her of the possibility of Albert's resurrection, or even to show her his phantom, filled her with such terror that she could not answer.

"Wife of Albert Podiebrad," resumed the examiner, "thy silence condemns thee. Albert is altogether dead to thee, and thy marriage is, in thy eyes, but an incident in thy adventurous life, entailing neither consequence nor obligation for the future. Zingara, thou mayst retire. We were interested in thy fate only on account of thy connection with the most excellent of men. Thou wert not worthy of our love, for thou wert not worthy of his. We regret not that we have given thee liberty; the reparation of all ills inflicted by despotism is to us a duty and a pleasure. But here our protection ceases. To-morrow thou wilt quit the asylum which we provided for thee, in the hope that thou wouldst leave it purified and sanctified: thou wilt return to the world; to the chimera of glory, to the intoxication of foolish passion! May God have mercy on thee! We abandon thee from this moment."

Consuelo remained for a short time confounded at this decree. A few days before she would not have submitted to it passively, but that mention of foolish passions placed vividly before her eyes the absurdity of her sudden love for the unknown, which she had cherished in her heart, and encouraged without examination or resistance. She felt humbled in her own eye, and the sentence of the Invisibles appeared to be, in some degree, deserved. The austerity of their language inspired her with mingled fear and respect, and she no longer thought of defying the right which they assumed of judging and condemning her conduct. Whatever degree of pride may belong to our natural character, and however irreproachable our life, it seldom happens that we can resist the immediate effect of an unexpected and serious word of rebuke, and that, instead of discussing the matter, we do not examine our consciences to discover whether we actually deserve such blame. Consuelo felt herself by no means free from reproach; and the chilling and strange effect of all the imposing ceremonial around her made her position singularly painful. Promptly, however, she reflected that she had not

asked to appear before that tribunal without being prepared to submit to its severity. She had come there to invite admonition and even chastisement, provided that by receiving it she could procure release and pardon for the chevalier. Laying aside, therefore, all personal resentment, she accepted the reproof without bitterness, and considered for some moments how to frame her reply.

"Possibly I may deserve this hard judgment," said she, at length; "I am far from satisfied with myself. But I came here with a certain idea of the Invisibles, which I will describe to you. What little I had heard of you from public rumour, and your generous act in restoring me to liberty, led me to think that you were men equally pre-eminent in virtue, and powerful in society. If you be such, as I am well pleased to believe you, how is it that you repulse me so roughly without directing me to the path which I should follow in order to escape from error, and to become worthy of your protection? I know that, for the sake of Albert de Rudolstadt, whom you rightly designate 'the most excellent of men,' his widow deserves some interest. But were I not the wife of Albert, even supposing I had never been worthy of that title, has not the Zingara Consuelo, a girl without name, without family, without country, has she no claims on your paternal care? Granting that I am very sinful, are you not like the Kingdom of Heaven, where there is 'more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance?' In short, if the law which unites you all in one assembly be a divine law, then are you transgressing that law by rejecting me. You undertook, you say, to purify and sanctify me. Endeavour then, to raise my soul to a level with yours. I am ignorant, not headstrong. Prove to me that you are holy, by showing yourselves merciful and patient, and I accept you for my masters and my models."

There was a moment's silence. The examiner turned towards the judges, who appeared to consult for a few moments. Then one among them spoke thus:—

"Consuelo, thou camest here with pride, why wilt thou not retire in the same spirit? We had the right to blame thee, since thou camest to question us. We have not the right to direct thy conscience and thy life, unless thou thyself bestow it upon us, freely and voluntarily. Can we ask

this sacrifice of thee? We are unknown to thee. This tribunal, whose sanctity thou invokest, may be the most corrupt, or at least, the most audacious, that ever worked in the dark against the principles which govern the world. What dost thou know of it? But, allowing that we could reveal to thee the profound science of a new and perfect virtue, wouldst thou have the courage to devote thyself to so long and arduous a study, without being acquainted with the object of it? Could we ourselves feel confidence in the persevering faith of a neophyte so ill-prepared as thou art? We might perhaps have important secrets to confide to thee, and our only guarantee would be thy generous instincts. It is true we know them all well enough to trust in thy discretion. But it is not discreet confidants that we stand in need of; we have plenty. We require to help us in advancing the law of God, fervent disciples, free from prejudice, from selfishness, from frivolous passions, and from worldly habits. Look into thine own heart. Canst thou offer us these sacrifices? Canst thou model thy actions and rule thy life by that impulse which now moves thee, and by the principles which we shall give thee to direct it? Woman, artist, child, canst thou dare to answer for thyself that thou wilt unite with grave men to labour in a work of ages?"

"All that you have just said is indeed very serious," replied Consuelo, "and I can scarcely comprehend it. Will you grant me time for reflection? Send me not from you without having interrogated my heart. I know not if it be worthy of the enlightenment you offer. Yet how can a sincere mind be unworthy of the truth? Can I be useful to you in any way? What I chiefly fear is my own incompetence. Woman and artist; in other words, a child! And yet, to have protected me as you have done, you must have presaged some good in me, and something whispers to me, also, that I ought not to quit you without attempting, at least, to show my gratitude. Do not banish me. then: try to instruct me."

"We allow thee eight days for reflection," replied the judge in the red robe, who had before spoken; "but thou must first give us thy sacred word that thou wilt not make the slightest attempt to discover where thou art, or who are the persons whom thou seest here. Thou must promise, also, not to exceed the boundary prescribed to thy daily walks,

even shouldst thou see the doors open, and the spectres of thy dearest friends inviting thee to follow. Thou must address no word to those who wait upon thee, nor to any one who may clandestinely enter thy apartments."

"That will never happen," replied Consuelo, quickly; "and I promise, if you wish, never to receive anyone without your sanction; and, in return, I humbly ask the favour——"

"Thou hast no favour to ask of us, no condition to propose to us. All the wants of thy soul and of thy body have been anticipated and supplied for the time that thou mayst remain here. If thou regrettest any relation, any friend, any servant, thou art free to depart. Solitude, or society provided by us, will be thy portion here."

"I ask nothing for myself; but I have heard that one of your friends, one of your disciples, or your servants—for I know not the rank he holds among you—is enduring a severe chastisement on my account. I am here, ready to accuse myself of the faults imputed to him, and it was for that purpose that I asked to appear before you."

"Is it a sincere and detailed confession that thou offerest?"

"If that be needful for his release—though it is a singular moral torture to a woman to confess openly before eight men——"

"Spare thyself that humiliation. We should have no guarantee of thy sincerity; besides which, we have, as yet, no claim upon thee. Whatever thou hast said, whatever thou hast thought, within the last hour, belongs unto thy past life. But remember that from this moment we are the masters of thy soul to search its inmost depths. Be it thy care to keep that soul so pure, that it may be always ready to confess itself without suffering or shame."

"Your generosity is delicate and paternal. But in the present case it is not only I who am concerned. Another suffers for my fault. Ought I not to justify him?"

"That care does not concern thee. If there be any guilty among us, he will exculpate himself, not by vain denials, or by rash assertions, but by acts of courage, of devotion, and of virtue. If his soul have faltered, we will raise him up, and assist him in the duty of self-conquest. Thou speakest of rigorous chastisement. Our chastisements are moral only. This man, whoever he may be, is our equal, our brother;

among us there are neither masters nor servants, subjects nor princes; thou hast been misled, we doubt not, by some false report. Depart in peace, and sin not."

As he ceased speaking, the examiner rang a little bell; the two armed masks re-entered, and placing the hood again over Consuelo's head, they re-conducted her to the pavilion, by the same subterranean route that had brought them thither.

CHAPTER XXII.

La Porporina felt greatly comforted on quitting this mysterious conventicle, for judging from the benevolent and paternal language of the Invisibles, she had no cause to be seriously uneasy about the chevalier, and Matteus must have deceived himself on the subject. All that she had just heard, however, appeared to her confused imagination like sunbeams behind a cloud; and sustained no longer by anxiety, nor by a violent effort of will, she very soon became faint with the fatigue of walking. Excessively hungry, and half-stifled by the glazed covering over her face, she was obliged to accept the proffered arms of her attendants to support herself from falling, and had scarcely reached her own apartment when she fainted. After a few moments, by the aid of a small flagon which was presented to her, and by the refreshing air which filled the room, she recovered sufficiently to observe that the two men who had conducted her were hastily retiring, while Matteus busied himself in serving a most tempting repast, and that the little doctor who had administered the sleeping draught to her before bringing her thither, had his fingers on her pulse, and was carefully attending her. She easily recognised him by his wig and the sound of his voice, which she was sure she had heard before, though she could not recollect on what occasion.

"My dear doctor," said she, smiling, "I think the best prescription would be to give me something to eat immediately. I have nothing to complain of but hunger, only I hope you will allow me to dispense this time with that coffee

which you make so well; I do not think I have strength to bear it."

"The coffee which I prepare," said the doctor, "is an excellent sedative. But be satisfied, madame le comtesse. I have not been commissioned to give you any. Trust in me to-day, and allow me the honour of supping with you. It is the wish of his highness that I should not quit you until you are entirely recovered, and I think that in half an hour's time a little nourishment will have entirely overcome this faintness."

"If it be the pleasure of his highness, it will be mine also, to have the honour of your company," said Consuelo, allowing Matteus to roll her chair to the table.

"My company will certainly not be useless to you," replied the doctor, beginning to demolish a splendid game pie, and cutting up a pheasant with the skill of an experienced practitioner. "Were I not here you might indulge the voracious appetite produced by long fasting, which would probably have a bad effect. Now I, who have no such danger to fear, can count carefully every bit that you take, while I heap a double portion on my own plate."

The voice of this gastronomical doctor continued to engage the attention of Consuelo. But her surprise was great, when, carelessly removing his mask, he laid it on the table, saying—

"To the deuce with this child's play, which hinders me from breathing, and from tasting the flavour of what I eat!"

Consuelo started on recognising in this greedy doctor the physician whom she had seen at the death-bed of her husband: Dr. Supperville, physician to the Margrave of Bareith. She had seen him once since at Berlin, but had not had the courage to look at him or speak to him. At this moment the contrast of his gluttonous appetite, with the distress and emotion that overpowered herself, recalled to her mind the cold want of sympathy betrayed in his ideas and language in the midst of the consternation and grief of the family of Rudolstadt; and it was with difficulty she could conceal from him the disagreeable impression he produced upon her. But Supperville was absorbed in the discussion of his pheasant, and seemed quite insensible of her uneasiness. Matteus completed the absurdity of the doctor's position by a *naïve* exclamation. This circumspect attendant had been

waiting upon him for five minutes without observing that his face was uncovered; and it was only when about to take up the mask in mistake for the cover of the pie-dish, that he cried out in alarm—

"Mercy on us, doctor, you have let your face fall on the table!"

"To the deuce with the face, I tell you! I can never eat in comfort with that before my mouth. Put it in the corner; you can give it me when I go."

"As you please, sir," said Matteus, in a tone of consternation. "I wash my hands of the business. But you are aware, sir, that I am obliged to give a minute account every evening of all that has been done or said in this place. It would be no use saying your mask had fallen off by accident. I could not deny that madame had seen your features."

"Very well, my good fellow, you will make your report," said the doctor, not at all disconcerted.

"And you will observe, Mr. Matteus," said Consuelo, "that I by no means encouraged the doctor to this disobedience; and that it was not my fault that I recog nised him."

"Be easy, madame," said Supperville, with his mouth full; "the prince is not so grim as he seems, and I am not at all afraid of him. I shall tell him that having authorised me to sup with you, he authorised me, by the same act, to divest myself of every obstacle to mastication and deglutition. I had also the honour of being so well known to you, that my voice could not have failed to betray me. Thus it was only a useless formality from which I freed myself, as the prince will readily acknowledge."

"However that may prove, sir," said Matteus, "I had rather it were you than I who played this game."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders, rallied poor Matteus for his fears, and continued to eat and drink enormously. Afterwards, Matteus having left the room, he drew his chair nearer to Consuelo, and lowering his voice, said—

"Dear signora, I am not really such a glutton as I appear" (having finished his supper he could speak comfortably on the subject), "and my object in coming to sup with you was to acquaint you with many important facts which particularly concern you"

"By what authority, and in whose name, are you going

to reveal them, sir?" said Consuelo, remembering the promise she had just given to the Invisibles.

"Of my own right, and by my own will," replied Supperville; "don't make yourself uneasy. I am no spy. I speak frankly, and I care not who repeats my words."

Consuelo thought for a moment that her duty required her to close the doctor's mouth, so that she might not be an accomplice in his treachery; but she considered also that a man who was sufficiently devoted to the Invisibles as to half poison people in order to bring them, without their knowledge, into this castle, would not be acting thus unless he had been secretly instructed. It is a snare they are spreading for me, thought she. It is a series of trials which is commencing. Let us watch the attack.

"I must, first of all, madame, tell you where, and with whom, you are."

"Oh, oh!" said Consuelo to herself, and she hastened to reply: "Many thanks, doctor, but I did not inquire, and I do not wish to know."

"Fa la lal la!" cried Supperville; "so you have fallen into that romantic mood into which the prince delights to plunge all his friends! But do not you give serious heed to his whims and idle tales; the least harm that would accrue from it would be to turn your brain and add one more to the number of his wild and visionary band. On my part, I have no intention to break the promise I have made him, that I will neither tell you his name nor that of the place in which you are. That is a matter of very secondary importance to you, for it would be only a satisfaction to your curiosity, and that is not the disease which I am anxious about; on the contrary, it is the excess of confidence on your part that I wish to treat. You may learn, then, without the least risk of displeasing him (I am interested in not betraying you), that you are under the roof of one of the very best and yet the most ridiculous of old men. A clever man, a philosopher, an affectionate and tender heart, courageous even to heroism, even to madness! A dreamer who treats the ideal as reality, and life as a romance. A sage, who from reading learned volumes and searching into first principles, has learnt at last, like Don Quixote, after the perusal of his treatises on chivalry, to mistake cottages for castles, galley-slaves for innocent victims, and windmills for monsters. In short, a

saint, if one considers only the beauty of his intentions, a fool, if one looks at the result. He has conceived, among other things, a scheme for universal and permanent conspiracy, by which to entrap all the wicked in the world, and paralyse their power of action: first, by combating and counteracting the tyranny of governments; secondly, by reforming the immorality or barbarism of laws which govern society; thirdly, by imbuing the hearts of all men of courage and devotion with enthusiasm for his mission and zeal for his doctrine. Nothing more. I'faith! and he expects to attain this! If he were even seconded by a few sincere and reasonable men, the little amount of good which he does succeed in producing might perhaps bear fruit; but, unfortunately, he is surrounded by a clique of intriguers and bold imposters, who pretend to partake his faith and forward his designs, and who make use of his credit to engross all the best places in every court of Europe; not forgetting to use for their own advantage the best part of the money destined to his noble projects. There you have the man and his machinery. It is for you to judge in what hands you are, and whether this generous protection, which has so happily snatched you from the claws of Master Fritz, does not threaten to make you still fall into worse plight by attempting to scale the clouds. You are now warned. Be on your guard against tempting promises, eloquent disclosures, tragical scenes, and the juggleries of Cagliostro, St. Germain, and their coadjutors."

"Are these last two persons here?" asked Consuelo, in some trouble, and undecided between the fear of being duped by the doctor and the probability of his assertions.

"I really do not know," said he; "every thing here is so full of mystery. There are two castles; one visible and palpable, where any one may see the arrival of people of the world who suspect nothing, where *fêtes* are given, and where there is all the appearance of a princely mode of life, full of gay and harmless frivolity. But this castle conceals another, which is a little subterranean world beneath it, very cleverly hidden. In this invisible castle are lucubrated all the wild visions of his highness. Innovators, reformers, inventors, sorcerers, prophets, alchemists, all architects of a new society, which, according to them, is always ready to swallow up, or displace the old one, to-morrow if you please, or the day

after; such are the mysterious guests who are received; who are lodged, who are consulted, without any one on the surface of the ground knowing anything about it; or, at least, without any of the profane being able to account for the noises in the cellars, except by the presence of spirits and tricks of hob-goblins in the lower parts of the building. Now observe: these said charlatans may be a hundred leagues from here, for they are great travellers by nature, or only a hundred feet from us, in good rooms, with secret doors and double locks. It is said that this old castle was formerly the rendezvous of freebooters; and that ever since then, in consequence of hereditary traditions, the ancestors af our prince always amused themselves in contriving here terrible conspiracies, which never, that I know of, ended in any thing. It is an old custom of the country, and the wisest heads have lent their sanction to it. I am not among the initiated in the mysteries of the invisible castle. I spend a few days here now and then, when my sovereign, the Princess Sophia of Prussia, Margravine of Bareith, gives me leave of absence from her territories. Besides, as I get terribly weary of the delightful court of Bareith, and as I have, in reality, a great friendship for the prince of whom we are speaking, and as I am by no means unwilling to play a trick now and then on the great Frederick, whom I detest, I occasionally render the said prince disinterested services, which are a great source of amusement to me. As I only receive orders from himself, these services are always innocent. That of assisting your escape from Spandau, and bringing you here like a sleeping dove, involved nothing to which I could object. I knew that you would be well treated here, and I thought you might find occasion to amuse yourself; if it be otherwise, and you are annoyed in any way—if the charlatan advisers of his highness attempt to seize upon you, and to make use of you in forwarding their intrigues in the world——"

"I fear nothing of the kind," replied Consuelo, more and more struck by the explanations of the doctor. "I shall know how to guard against their suggestions if they wound my sense of right or offend my conscience."

"Are you so sure, madame la comtesse?" rejoined Supperville. "Take care; do not be too certain, and beware of boasting. Reasonable and good people have left this place

half crazy, and all prepared to work evil in the world. All means are accepted by those intriguers to make a tool of the prince; and this dear prince is so easily deceived, that he has himself, at times, lent a hand in the destruction of most worthy men, thinking all the time that he was saving them. You must know that these intriguers are very clever; that they know how to frighten, to persuade, to agitate, to bewilder the senses, and mislead the imagination. First, by a steady system of deceit, and a host of minor appliances which are altogether incomprehensible; and also by prescriptions, combinations, and delusions, ever at their service. They will send spectres to you; they will make you fast, in order to cloud your comprehension; they will besiege you with phantasmagoria, now alluring, now terrible. In the end they will make you superstitious, and perhaps mad, as I had the honour of mentioning to you just now; and then——"

"And then! What can they expect of me? Of what importance am I in the world that they should wish to draw me into their nets?"

"Indeed! The Countess of Rudolstadt cannot imagine?"

"Not at all."

"You surely remember that M. Cagliostro showed you the dead Count Albert, your husband, alive and well?"

"How do you know that, if you are not initiated into the subterranean world of which you speak?"

"You related the circumstance to the Princess Amelia of Prussia, who is a little given to gossip, like all curious persons. And are you not aware, also, that she is closely connected with the spectre of the Count de Rudolstadt?"

"A certain Trismegistus that I have heard spoken of?"

"Precisely. I have seen this Trismegistus, and it is a fact that, at first sight, he strongly resembles the count. This resemblance is greatly increased by whitening his face, and making him assume the count's dress and manners. Do you understand now?"

"Less than ever. What interest could they have in passing that man off for Count Albert?"

"Ah! how single-minded and true you are! Count Albert is dead, leaving a large fortune which descends by entail from the hands of the Canoness Winceslawa, to those of the little Baroness Amelia, cousin to Count Albert, unless

you put in your claim for a dower, or a life-interest. They will first try to induce you——"

"It is true!" said Consuelo; "you will enlighten me as to the sense of certain words!"

"Oh! I have not told you half. This life-interest would be a contestable matter, and besides, would not be enough to satisfy the appetite of these adventurers who wish to secure you; you have no children; you must have a husband. Well, the Count Albert is not dead; he was in a trance; they buried him alive; the devil disinterred him; M. Cagliostro administered a potion to him; Count St. Germain took him out a walk. In short, at the end of two years, he re-appears, relates his adventures, throws himself at your feet, consummates marriage with you, and sets out for the Château des Géants, is recognised by the canoness and some old servants who don't see very distinctly, encounters a lawsuit if needful, and pays the witnesses. He next posts to Vienna with his faithful wife to claim the recognition of his rights by the empress. All the grand ladies of the court are interested in the history of a handsome man who has been the victim of so fatal a mischance. The Prince de Kaunitz, who is rather partial to actresses, takes up your cause; it triumphs, and you return victorious to Riesenburg. You show your cousin Amelia the door, you enter into an alliance with our prince here and his charlatans to reform society and change the face of the globe. This is all very agreeable, and requires only a trifling delusion on your part, by which you replace your illustrious husband by a clever adventure. Now, do you see? You will turn this over in your mind. It was my duty, as physician and friend of the family of Riesenberg, and as a man of honour, to tell you all this. They counted on my services to identify Trismegistus with Count Albert. But as I saw him actually expire, and as I can speak scientifically as to the fact, as I also perceive certain points of difference between these two men, and as I am aware that this adventurer has been well known for some years at Berlin, I am happy to say that I cannot lend myself to such an imposture. I am equally certain that you will not do so, though they will leave no means untried to persuade you that Count Albert has grown two inches, and has acquired a fresh and florid complexion in his coffin. But I hear Matteus coming; he is an honest fellow, and suspects nothing. I will now

retire; I have said all; and having nothing more to detain me here, I shall quit the castle in an hour."

The doctor, having said this with remarkable volubility, replaced his mask, bowed profoundly to Consuelo, and retired, leaving her to finish her supper, if she felt inclined. Agitated and overwhelmed by all she had heard, she sought her chamber, but it was not until after many an hour of vague anxiety and perplexing doubt that she at length found repose in sleep.

CHAPTER XXIII.

On the morrow Consuelo felt herself broken in body and mind. The sarcastic revelations of Supperville, succeeding so suddenly to the paternal encouragements of the Invisibles, produced upon her the effect of an immersion in freezing water after a genial heat. She had been raised for a moment towards heaven to fall back again immediately to earth. She was almost annoyed with the doctor for having undeceived her; for already, in her dreams, she had taken pleasure in clothing with a dazzling majesty this august tribunal which held out to her its arms as an adopting family, as a refuge against the dangers of the world and the follies of youth.

The doctor, nevertheless, appeared to deserve gratitude, and this Consuelo recognised, though without being able to feel it. Was not his conduct sincere, courageous, and disinterested? But Consuelo thought him too sceptical, too much of a materialist, too much given to distrust good intentions, and to mock at noble characters. In spite of what he had said to her concerning the imprudent and dangerous credulity of the anonymous prince, she still cherished a high idea of this noble old man, as ardent in the cause of virtue as a youth, and single-minded as a child in his faith in human perfectibility. The discourse which had been addressed to her in the subterranean hall returned to her mind, and appeared to her filled with calm authority and austere wisdom. Charity and mercy pierced through the threats and reserve of an affected severity, ready to prove its falseness at the slightest transport of Consuelo's heart. Would cheats,

avaricious men, and charlatans, have thus spoken and acted towards her? Their valiant enterprise of reforming the world, so ridiculous in the eyes of the cynic Supperville, was in harmony with the eternal vow, the romantic hopes, the enthusiastic faith with which Albert had inspired his wife, and which she had again found united to benevolent sympathy in Gottlieb's disordered but generous head. Was not this Supperville hateful for endeavouring to dissuade her, and to deprive her of her faith in God at the same time that he deprived her of her confidence in the Invisibles?

Consuelo, much more given to the poetry of the soul than to the dry appreciation of the sad realities of actual life, struggled against the opinions of Supperville, and endeavoured to repulse them. Had he not abandoned himself to gratuitous suppositions? he, who confessed that he had never been initiated into the subterranean world, and who even appeared ignorant of the name and the existence of the council of Invisibles? That Trismegistus was a *chevalier d'industrie* was possible, though the Princess Amelia affirmed the contrary, and the friendship of the Count Golowkin, the best and wisest of the nobility whom Consuelo had met at Berlin, spoke in his favour. That Cagliostro and Saint Germain might also be impostors, was quite as conceivable, though they likewise might have been deceived by an extraordinary resemblance. But while confounding these three adventurers in the same contempt, it did not follow that they formed part of the council of the Invisibles, nor that this association of virtuous men would not repel their suggestions as soon as Consuelo should herself have proved that Trismegistus was not Albert. Would it not be time to withdraw her confidence after this decisive proof, if they persisted in desiring so grossly to deceive her? Until then Consuelo desired to tempt her fate, and to learn more of these Invisibles to whom she owed her liberty, and whose paternal reproaches had reached her heart. She determined upon this last course: and while waiting the issue of the adventure, she resolved to treat all that Supperville had told her as a trial to which he was authorised to subject her, or rather as a necessity of venting his spleen against rivals better received and treated by the prince than himself.

A last conjecture tormented Consuelo more than all the others: Was it absolutely impossible that Albert should be

still alive? Supperville had not noted the phenomena which for two years had preceded his last illness. He had even refused to believe in them, persisting in thinking that the frequent absences of the young count in the subterranean cave were due to other causes. She alone, with Zdenko, was in possession of the secret of these lethargic crises. The self-love of the doctor would not allow him to confess that he might have been deceived in the proofs of death. Now that Consuelo was aware of the existence and the material power of the council of the Invisibles, she dared to give herself up to many conjectures as to the manner in which they might have snatched Albert from the horrors of an anticipated sepulture, and have secretly received him among themselves for some unknown end. All that Supperville had revealed to her of the mysteries of the château and the eccentricities of the prince, aided in confirming this supposition. The resemblance of an adventurer called Trismegistus might complicate the marvellousness of the fact, but it did not destroy its possibility. This thought took such powerful possession of poor Consuelo that she fell into a profound melancholy. Were Albert living, she would not hesitate to rejoin him as soon as they would allow her, and to devote herself to him eternally. But more than ever she felt that she must suffer from a devotion where love had no place; the chevalier presented himself to her imagination as a cause of bitter regret, and to her conscience as a source of future remorse. Should she be obliged to renounce him, the dawning love in her bosom would follow the customary course of thwarted inclinations, and would become a passion. Consuelo did not ask herself with hypocritical resignation why this dear Albert desired to quit a tomb where he was so happy; but she believed that self-sacrifice to this man, perhaps even beyond the tomb, was her destiny, and she desired to accomplish this destiny to the end; but she suffered strangely, and wept for the unknown, the object of her most involuntary, her most ardent love. She was aroused from these meditations by a slight noise, and the brush of a light wing on her shoulder, and she uttered an exclamation of surprise and joy as she saw a pretty robin fly into her room and approach her without fear. After a few moments of reserve he consented to take a fly from her hand.

"Is it thou, my poor friend, my faithful companion?" said Consuelo, with tears of childish joy. "Is it possible that thou hast sought and found me here? No, that cannot be. Pretty, confiding creature, thou resemblest my friend, but thou art not he. Thou belongest to some gardener, and thou hast escaped from the greenhouse, where thou hast passed the cold days amidst ever beautiful flowers. Come to me, consoler of the prisoner, since the instinct of thy race impels thee towards the lonely and the captive, I desire to transfer to thee all the friendship I entertained for thy brother."

Consuelo had been playing seriously for a quarter of an hour with this amiable little creature, when she heard without a slight whistle, which appeared to make the intelligent bird tremble. It let the dainties fall which its new friend had lavished upon it, hesitated a little, twinkled his large black eyes, and suddenly determined to take to flight towards the window, attracted by a fresh call from an irresistable authority. Consuelo followed the bird with her eyes, and saw it lose itself in the foliage. But while seeking to distinguish it again, she perceived in the depths of the garden, on the opposite bank of the rivulet which bounded it, in a somewhat open place, a personage easy to recognise, spite of the distance. It was Gottlieb, sauntering along by the water in a cheerful manner, singing and trying to skip. Consuelo, forgetful for a while of the prohibition of the Invisibles, tried, by waving her handkerchief at the window, to attract his attention, but he was absorbed in his endeavours to recall the robin. He raised his head towards the trees, whistling, and departed without having observed Consuelo.

"God be blessed! and the Invisibles, also, in spite of Supperville!" she said to herself. "This poor child appears happy and in better health; his guardian angel the robin is with him. It seems to me also the presage of a brighter destiny; I will doubt my protectors no more. Distrust withers the heart."

She sought for the means of occupying her time in a manner profitable for the new moral education which had been announced to her, and she determined to read, for the first time since she had been at ——. She entered her library, upon which she had as yet thrown but a casual

glance, and resolved seriously to examine the choice of books which had been placed at her disposal. They were not numerous, but extremely curious, and probably very rare, if not for the most part unique. It was a collection of the most remarkable philosophical writings of all epochs and all nations, but abridged and compressed to the essence of their doctrines, and translated into various languages which Consuelo could comprehend.

A whole week elapsed in solitude, undisturbed by the reports of Matteus, and employed by Consuelo in reading and music. She had resolved never again to address the smallest question to him, while he perhaps had been reprimanded for his indiscretion, since he had now become as taciturn as he was formerly prolix. The robin came to see Consuelo every morning, but unaccompanied by Gottlieb in the distance. It seemed as if this little being—Consuelo was not far from believing it enchanted—had regular hours for enlivening her with his presence, and returned punctually towards noon to his other friend. In fact there was nothing wonderful in this. Free animals have their habits, and form a regular employment for their days with more intelligence and forethought even than domestic ones. One day, however, Consuelo observed that he did not fly so gracefully as usual; he appeared impatient and annoyed. Instead of coming to peck at her fingers, he only thought of freeing himself by means of his claws and beak from some irritating encumbrance. Consuelo approached him, and perceived a black thread hanging from his wing. Had the poor little thing been caught in a snare, and only escaped by means of its courage and address, carrying with it an end of its chain? She had no difficulty in catching him, but she found considerable in delivering it from a silk thread skilfully crossed upon its back, and which fixed beneath the left wing a very small bag of brown stuff. In this bag she found a small billet, written in almost imperceptible characters, upon paper so fine that she feared to tear it with her breath. From the first words, she saw that it was a message from her beloved unknown. It contained these few words:—

"They have confided to me a work of generosity, hoping that the pleasure of doing good will calm the restlessness of my passion; but nothing, not even the exercise of charity, can distract a soul in which you reign. I have accom-

plished my task more quickly than they thought possible. I have returned, and I love you more than ever. The heavens, however, have become clearer. I know not what has passed between you and them, but they seem more favourably disposed, and my love is no longer treated as a crime, but as a personal misfortune. A misfortune! Oh! they do not love! They know not that I cannot be unhappy if you love me; and you love me, do you not? Say so to the robin of Spandau. It is he. I have brought him hither in my bosom. Oh! let him repay me for my care, by bringing me a word from you! Gottlieb will remit it to me faithfully, without even looking at it."

Mystery and romantic circumstances fan the fire of love.

Consuelo felt violently tempted to reply; and the fear of displeasing the Invisibles, the scruple of breaking her word, it must be confessed, but feebly restrained her. But as she reflected that she might be discovered, and procure a fresh exile for the chevalier, she had the courage to abstain. She restored the robin to liberty without confiding to it a single word in reply, but not without shedding bitter tears over the sorrow and disappointment this severity would cause her lover.

She tried to renew her studies; but neither reading nor singing could distract her from the agitation which fermented in her bosom, from the moment she knew the chevalier was near her. She could not help hoping that he would disobey for them both, and that she should see him in the evening gliding among the flowery thickets of her garden. But she did not wish to encourage him by showing herself. She passed the evening in the house, watching through her blinds, palpitating, filled with fear and desire, and yet resolved not to answer his appeal.

But he did not appear, and she experienced as much sorrow and surprise as if she had relied upon a temerity which she would nevertheless have blamed, and which would have aroused all her terrors. All the little mysterious dramas of a young and ardent love took place in her bosom in the course of a few hours. It was a new phase of emotions, unknown in her life. She had often waited for Anzoleto, of an evening, upon the quays of Venice or upon the terraces of the Corte Minelli; but she had waited for him while going over her morning's lesson, or saying her rosary,

without impatience, without terror, without palpitation or anguish. This childhood's love was so akin to friendship, that in no one point did it resemble what she now felt for Liverani.

On the morrow she anxiously awaited the robin, but the robin did not come. Had he been seized upon his way by some ferocious spy? Had the annoyance occasioned by the band of silk and its burden prevented him from venturing out to-day? But he had so much sense that he would have remembered that Consuelo had delivered him from it, and he would have come to beg her to do the like service again. Consuelo mourned through the whole day. She who had no tears for great misfortunes, and who had not shed one during her imprisonment at Spandau, now felt herself overwhelmed and consumed by the sufferings of her love, and sought in vain for the strength which had sustained her against all the other evils of her life.

In the evening she forced herself to read a score at the harpsichord, when two black figures presented themselves at the entrance of the music saloon, without her having heard them ascend. She could not restrain a cry of terror at the appearance of these spectres; but one of them said to her, in a voice more gentle than at the first time, "Follow us!" And she rose in silence to obey. They presented her with a bandage of silk, saying, "Cover your eyes yourself, and swear that you will do it conscientiously. Swear also that if the bandage should fall, or become disarranged, you will shut your eyes until we have told you to open them."

"I swear it!" replied Consuelo.

"Your oath is accepted," replied the conductor.

And, as upon the first occasion, Consuelo walked through subterranean passages; but when they had told her to stop, an unknown voice added—

"Take off the bandage yourself. Henceforth no one shall raise a hand to you. You shall have no other guardian than your word."

Consuelo found herself in a vaulted cabinet, lighted by a small sepulchral lamp suspended from the key-stone in the centre. A single judge, in a red robe, and a livid mask, was seated upon an antique couch near a table. He was bent with age; a few silver locks escaped from beneath his skull-cap. His voice was broken and trembling. This appearance

of old age changed into respectful deference the fear from which Consuelo could not divest herself at approaching an Invisible.

"Listen to me attentively," said he, making a sign to her to seat herself upon a stool at some distance. "You appear here before your confessor. I do not lie. Still, if you wish to reject me, you are free to do so."

"I accept you," replied Consuelo, "providing always that my confession does not imply that of another."

"Vain scruples!" replied the old man. "A schoolboy does not reveal to his master the fault of his comrade; but a son hesitates to warn his father of that of his brother, because he knows that the father will correct without punishing him. At least such ought to be the law of families. You are here in the bosom of a family which seeks to realise the ideal. Have you confidence?"

This question, sufficiently arbitrary in the mouth of one unknown, was put in such gentleness, and in so sympathising a voice, that Consuelo, suddenly interested and softened, replied without hesitating—

"I have full confidence."

"Listen again," replied the old man. "You uttered, the first time of your appearance before us, this sentence, which we observed and have duly considered: 'It is a strange moral torture for a woman to confess herself aloud before eight men.' Your modesty has been taken into consideration. You will confess only to me, and I will not betray your secrets. Full power has been given me, though I am not superior to any one in the council, to direct you in a particular affair of a delicate nature, and which has but an indirect connection with your initiation. Will you reply to me without concealment? Will you lay bare your heart before me?"

"I will."

"I will ask you nothing of your past. As you have been told, your past does not belong to us; but you have been warned to purify your soul from the moment which marked the commencement of your adoption. You must have made your reflections upon the difficulties and the consequences of the adoption; it is not to me alone that you must render account of them; another matter is in question between you and me. Reply then."

"I am ready."

"One of our children has conceived love for you. For the last eight days have you replied to this love, or have you repulsed it?"

"I have repulsed it in all my actions."

"I know it. Your smallest actions are known to us. I ask you the secret of your heart, and not that of your conduct."

Consuelo felt her cheeks burn, and kept silence.

"You think my question cruel? Nevertheless, you must reply. I will guess nothing. I must know and record."

"Well then, I love!" replied Consuelo, borne away by the desire of being true. But scarcely had she given bold utterance to this word than she melted into tears.

"Why do you weep?" renewed the confessor gently. "Is it from shame or repentance?"

"I know not. It seems to me that it is not from repentance; I love too much for that."

"Whom do you love?"

"You know; I know not."

"But what if I do not know? His name?"

"Liverani."

"That is the name of no one person in particular. It is common to all among our adepts who desire to bear it and make use of it; it is a *nom de guerre*, like all the rest which the greater number of us use in our journey."

"I know him by no other, and it was not from him I learned this."

"How could you recognise him."

"It seems to me that by the touch of his hand I should recognise him."

"You believe you love this Liverani? seriously, religiously, ardently?"

"I feel all this in my heart: unless, indeed, he be unworthy!"

"He is worthy."

"Oh, my father!" cried Consuelo, transported with gratitude, and ready to kneel before the old man.

"He is worthy of an immense love. But you must renounce him."

"Then it is I who am not worthy?" said Consuelo, mournfully.

"You would be worthy of him, but you are not free. Albert de Rudolstadt is living."

"Oh, God! forgive me!" murmured Consuelo, falling on her knees, and hiding her face in her hands.

The confessor and the penitent preserved a mournful silence. But soon Consuelo, remembering the accusation of Supperville, was penetrated with horror. This old man, whose presence filled her with veneration, would he lend himself to an infernal machination? Would he play upon the virtue and sensibility of the unfortunate Consuelo to throw her into the arms of a miserable impostor? She raised her head, and pale with terror, her eyes dry, and her mouth trembling, she tried to pierce with a look that impassable mask, which perhaps concealed the pallor of guilt, or the diabolical laugh of a villain.

"Albert is living?" said she; "are you quite sure, sir? Do you know that there is a man who resembles him, and that I myself thought I saw Albert when I saw him?"

"I know all this absurd romance," replied the old man, in a calm tone; "I know all the follies Supperville invented to exculpate himself from the crime of supreme ignorance of which he was guilty when he allowed a sleeping man to be carried to the tomb, Two words will suffice to dissipate all these inventions of folly. The first is, that Supperville was judged incapable of passing the lowest grades of the secret societies of which we have the supreme direction, and that his wounded vanity, joined to a morbid and indiscreet curiosity, has not been able to support this affront. The second is, that the Count Albert has never thought of reclaiming his heritage, which he has voluntarily renounced, and that he will never consent to resume his name and rank in the world. He could not do so without raising scandalous discussions as to his identity, which his pride could not endure. He has, perhaps, but ill understood his true duties of renouncing, so to say, himself. He might have made a better use of his fortune than his heirs. He has deprived himself of one of the means of practising charity which Providence had placed in his hands; but many others remain to him; besides, the voice of his love has been stronger in this than that of his conscience. He remembered that you did not love him, precisely because he was rich and noble. He desired to abjure beyond all possible return, his fortune and his name. He has done it, and we have allowed him to do so. Now you do not love him, you love another. He will never claim from

you the title of husband, which he owes but to his agony and your compassion. He will have the courage to renounce you. We have no other power over the man whom you call Liverani and over yourself, than that of persuasion. If you will fly together, we cannot prevent it. We have neither dungeons, nor means of restraint, nor corporeal punishments at our service, whatever a credulous or timid servant may have told you on this point; we hate the measures of tyranny. Your fate is in your own hands. Go and reflect once more, poor Consuelo, and may God inspire you."

Consuelo had listened to this discourse in a profound stupor. When the old man had ended, she rose, and said with energy—

"I do not need reflection; my choice is made. Is Albert here? Conduct me to his feet."

"Albert is not here. He could not be a witness of this struggle. He is even ignorant of the crisis you are now undergoing."

"Oh, my dear Albert!" cried Consuelo, raising her arms towards heaven, "I shall come out of it victorious." Then kneeling before the old man: "My father!" said she, "absolve me, and assist me never to see this Liverani again; I will no longer love him; I do not love him now."

The old man spread his trembling hands over the head of Consuelo, but when he withdrew them she could not rise. She had stifled her sobs in her bosom; and overcome by a conflict beyond her strength, she was obliged to lean upon the arm of the confessor to leave the oratory.

On the morrow the robin came at noon, and tapped with his beak and claws at Consuelo's window. As she was about to open it, she remarked a black thread crossed over his red breast, and an involuntary impulse made her carry her hand to the bolt, but she as quickly withdrew it.

"Go, messenger of misfortune," said she, "go, poor innocent bearer of guilty letters and culpable words. I should not, perhaps, have the courage to refrain from replying to a last farewell. I must not even let him know that I mourn and suffer."

She fled into the music saloon to escape the winged tempter, who, accustomed to a better reception, flew round and round, striking against the glass in a species of anger. She placed

herself at the harpsichord that she might not hear the cries and reproaches of her favourite, who had followed her to the window of this room; and she experienced something like the anguish of a mother, who closes her ears to the prayers and entreaties of her child in disgrace. Nevertheless, it was not to the anger and disappointment of the robin that poor Consuelo was the most sensible at that moment. The note he bore beneath his wing had a much more heart-rending voice; it was this voice which seemed to our romantic recluse to weep and to entreat for a hearing.

Still she resisted; but it is in the nature of love to be inflamed by obstacles, and to return to the assault even more triumphant and imperious after every fresh victory. It may be said without metaphor, that to resist love is to furnish it with new arms. Towards three o'clock, Matteus entered with the bunch of flowers which he brought every day to his prisoner (for at heart he loved her for her gentleness and goodness), and according to custom, she untied these flowers, that she might arrange them herself in the beautiful vases on the *console*. This was one of the pleasures of her captivity; but this time she was insensible to it, and set to work mechanically, as though to kill some moments of the slow hours which were consuming her, when, on untying the bouquet of narcissus, which occupied the centre of the perfumed bunch, a letter fell from it, carefully sealed, but without address. In vain she tried to persuade herself that it might be from the tribunal of the Invisibles. Otherwise, would Matteus have brought it? Unfortunately Matteus was no longer within reach to afford an explanation. She must ring for him; it would take him five minutes to answer; by chance he did not appear for at least ten. Consuelo had exhausted all her courage upon the robin. The letter was read when Matteus re-appeared, just at the moment when Consuelo had arrived at this postscript: "Do not question Matteus; he is ignorant of the disobedience I have made him commit." Matteus was simply required to wind up the clock, which had stopped.

This letter of the chevalier's was more impassioned, more impetuous than all the others; it was even imperious in its delirium. We shall not transcribe it. Love-letters awake no emotion save in the heart which inspires and shares the fire that dictated them. In themselves they resemble each

other; but every being intoxicated with love, finds in what is addressed to him an irresistible power, an incomparable novelty. No one thinks that another is as much loved as he, or in the same manner; he believes himself the most loved, the only loved in the world. Where this ingenuous blindness and this fascinating vanity do not exist, there is no passion; and passion had at length invaded the peaceful and noble heart of Consuelo.

The note of the unknown brought confusion to all her thoughts. He implored an interview; he did more—he announced one, and excused himself beforehand in the necessity of profiting by his last moments. He pretended to believe that Consuelo had loved Albert, and might love him yet again. He pretended also to desire to submit to her decision; and, in the meanwhile, he invoked a word of pity, a tear of regret, a last adieu. These last adieus are like the last appearance of a great artist announced to the public, but usually happily followed by many others. The sad Consuelo felt that her resolution and her will would not preserve her from an inconceivable attraction; and that if the chevalier decided upon breaking his vow by speaking to her and disclosing his features, as he appeared resolved, she should not have the power to prevent this violation of the laws of the Invisible order. She had but one refuge, and this was to implore the assistance of this same tribunal. But must she accuse and betray Liverani? The worthy old man who had revealed to her the existence of Albert, and who had paternally received her confidences the evening before, would he not also receive this beneath the seal of the Confession? He would pity the delirium of the chevalier; he would only condemn him in the secrecy of his heart. Consuelo wrote to the old man that she desired to see him at nine o'clock that same evening; that her honour, her repose, perhaps even her life, was concerned. This was the hour for which the unknown had announced himself; but to whom, and by whom, could she send this letter? Matteus refused to move a step beyond the premises before midnight; such were his orders, and nothing could move him. He had been severely reprimanded for not having punctually observed his orders with regard to the prisoner, and henceforth he was inflexible. The hour approached; and Consuelo, while seeking for the means of escaping this fatal trial, had not for a moment

thought of the means of resisting it. Virtue, imposed upon woman, will never be other than a name, while men do not share the task! All your plans of defence are reduced to subterfuges; all your sacrifices of personal happiness fall before the fear of driving the beloved object to despair. Consuelo determined upon a last resource, suggested by the heroism and the weakness which divided her mind. She set about seeking the mysterious entrance to the subterranean passages which was in the pavilion itself, resolved to take refuge in it, and present herself at all risks before the Invisibles. She supposed, gratuitously enough, that the place of their meetings was accessible, once the entrance to the caves was gained, and that they met every evening in the same place. She did not know that upon that day they were all absent, and that Liverani alone had retraced his steps, after having feigned to follow them upon some mysterious excursion.

But all her efforts to find the secret door, or the trap to the subterranean passages, were useless. She no longer possessed, as at Spandau, the coolness, the perseverance, the necessary faith, for discovering the smallest fissure in a wall, the slightest jutting of a stone. Her hand trembled as she sounded the woodwork and the tapestry, and her sight grew confused; every moment she thought she heard the step of the chevalier on the gravel walk of the garden, or upon the marble of the peristyle.

Suddenly she seemed to hear them beneath her, as if he were ascending a secret staircase under her feet, as if he were approaching by an invisible door, or as if, after the manner of familiar spirits, he were about to break through the wall and present himself before her eyes. She let fall her taper, and fled to the bottom of the garden. The pretty rivulet which crossed it here arrested her course. She listened, and heard, or thought she heard, some one walking behind her. Then, somewhat losing her self-possession, she threw herself into the boat which the gardener used for fetching sand and turf. Consuelo imagined that by detaching it she should drive to the opposite shore; but the current was rapid, and found an outlet from the premises under a low arch closed by a grating. Drifting with the stream, in a few minutes the boat would strike against the grating. Consuelo saved herself from a serious shock by rushing to

the prow and extending her hands. A child of Venice and a child of the people could not be much embarrassed by this manœuvre. But, strange chance! the grating yielded beneath her hand, and opened solely by the impulse which the current gave the boat. Alas! thought Consuelo, perhaps this passage is never closed. I am a prisoner upon parole, and yet I fly, I violate my oath! But I do so only to seek protection and refuge among my hosts, not to abandon and betray them.

She sprang upon the bank, whither the current of the river had borne her skiff, and plunged into a close thicket. Consuelo could not run very quickly beneath their dark hade; the avenue wound more and more as it narrowed. Every moment the fugitive struck against the trees, and several times fell upon the turf. Still she felt hope returning to her soul; these shades re-assured her; it seemed to her impossible that Liverani should discover her in them.

After having walked for some time at hazard, she found herself at the foot of a hill covered with rocks, whose uncertain outline was defined against a gray and cloudy sky. A fresh, stormy wind had risen, and the rain began to fall. Consuelo, not daring to retrace her steps, lest Liverani should have followed her, and was even now searching on the banks of the river, ventured upon the somewhat rough path of the hill. She imagined that upon arriving at the top she should discover the lights of the château, whatever might be her position: but when she arrived, the lightning, which began to glare in the sky, showed before her the ruins of a vast edifice, the imposing and melancholy remains of another age.

The rain obliged Consuelo to seek for shelter, but it was with difficulty she found it. The towers were cracked from top to bottom on the inside, and clouds of tiercels and gerfalcons, startled by her approach, uttered sharp and savage cries.

In the midst of rocks and briars, Consuelo, crossing the roofless chapel, whose skeleton proportions were displayed in the bluish glare of the lightning, gained the court, the surface of which was covered with smooth short grass. The mass of ruined buildings which surrounded this abandoned court presented the most fantastic appearance, and at each flash of lightning the eye could scarcely understand those

attenuated and distorted spectres, all those incoherent forms of destruction. It was a frightful yet poetic spot, and Consuelo felt herself seized by a sort of superstitious terror, as if her presence had profaned a place reserved for the funereal conferences or the silent reveries of the dead. On a calm night, and under less exciting circumstances, she might have admired the severe beauty of this building; she would perhaps have been moved to moralise upon the rigour of time, and the destinies which pitilessly overthrow the palace and the fortress, and lay their ruins in the grass by the side of those of the cottage.

The sadness which the ruins of these abodes inspire is not the same in the imagination of the artist and the heart of the patrician. But at this moment of trouble and fear, and on this stormy night, Consuelo, being unsustained by the enthusiasm which had urged her to serious enterprise, felt herself once more the child of the people; trembling at the idea of seeing a phantom of the night, and, above all, dreading those of the ancient *châtelains:* ferocious oppressors during their life, desolating and threatening spectres after their death. The thunder raised its voice; the wind brought down the bricks and mortar of the dismantled walls; the long branches of bramble and ivy wound like serpents around the battlements of the tower. Consuelo, still seeking a shelter from the rain and falling fragments, penetrated beneath the vault of a staircase which seemed in better preservation than the rest: it was that of the great feudal tower, the most ancient and solid construction of the whole edifice. After descending twenty steps, she found a large octagon room, occupying the whole interior of the tower; the winding staircase being constructed, as in all buildings of the time, within the wall, which was eighteen or twenty feet thick. The vault of this room was shaped like the inside of a beehive. There were neither doors nor windows remaining; but these openings were so narrow and deep that the wind could find no entrance. Consuelo resolved to await in this spot the end of the tempest, and approaching a window, she remained for more than an hour contemplating the imposing spectacle of the lurid sky, and listening to the terrible voices of the storm.

At last the wind fell, the clouds dispersed, and Consuelo thought of retiring; but as she turned from the window,

she was surprised to see a more permanent light within the room than that which the lightning produced. This light, at first faint and trembling, gradually increased, till the whole room was filled with it, whilst a slight crackling was heard in the chimney. Consuelo looked towards the side whence the noise came, and saw beneath the arch of this ancient fire-place a fire of dried sticks, which appeared to be kindling of itself. She drew near, and observed half-consumed faggots, and the remains of a fire not long lighted, and evidently hastily abandoned. Alarmed at this circumstance, which revealed the presence of some person, Consuelo, who, notwithstanding, perceived no traces of furniture around, quickly returned towards the staircase, and was hastening to descend, when she heard voices below and footsteps sounding on the gravel. Then her imaginary terrors gave way to real apprehensions. This damp and desolate tower could only be inhabited by some gamekeeper, savage as his dwelling, or it might be, drunken and brutal, at all events less civilised and respectful than honest Matteus. The footsteps rapidly drew near. Consuelo hastily ascended the staircase that she might avoid the doubtful intruders, and having accomplished about twenty steps found herself on the second story, where there was little danger of being followed, since it was entirely unroofed and consequently uninhabitable. Happily for her the rain had ceased; nay, she could even distinguish a few stars through the wild vegetation which crowned the tower about a dozen feet above her head. A ray of light from the flooring beneath was soon cast upon the gloomy walls of the edifice, and Consuelo, cautiously approaching, saw through a large crevice all that was taking place in the room below. Two men were in the apartment, one walking up and down and stamping on the ground to warm himself; the other, stooping beneath the ample chimney, was occupied in raking the fire together, which began to blaze on the hearth. At first she could distinguish nothing but their dresses, which announced the high rank of the wearers, their hats concealing their faces; but the light of the fire increasing, and the man who was stirring it with the point of his sword having risen to hang up his hat on a projecting stone, Consuelo perceived a mass of black hair and the upper part of a face, and could scarcely repress a cry of mingled tenderness and terror. He spoke, and Consuelo could no longer doubt that it was Albert de Rudolstadt.

"Draw near, my friend," said he to his companion, "and warm yourself at the only remaining fire-place in this vast mansion. This is a gloomy lodging, Monsieur de Trenck, but you have met with worse in your rough journeys."

"And have sometimes been obliged to do without any at all," replied the lover of the Princess Amelia. "Truly, this is more hospitable than it looks, and I have joyfully taken refuge in it upon several occasions. So, my dear count, you come sometimes to meditate among these ruins, and keep watch in this haunted tower?"

"I do, indeed, frequently come here, but from more reasonable motives, which I cannot tell you now, but which you shall know by-and-bye."

"I guess them. From the top of this tower you overlook a certain park and pavilion?"

"No, Trenck, the building of which you speak is hidden behind a wooded hill, and cannot be seen from hence."

"But a few minutes will take you to it, and should you be interrupted you can seek refuge here. Come! confess that, just now, when I met you in the wood——"

"I can confess nothing, friend Trenck, and you have promised not to question me."

"True; I ought to think of nothing but congratulating myself on having met with you in this immense park, or rather forest, where I had so completely lost my way, that, but for you, I should have fallen headlong into some picturesque ravine, or have been drowned in some limpid torrent. Are we far from the castle?"

"About a quarter of a mile. Dry your clothes while the wind dries the paths through the park, and we will go on our way."

"This old castle does not please me so well as the new, I must confess, and I can quite understand why it has been abandoned to the owls. Still I am rejoiced to find myself alone with you, at such an hour, and on such a gloomy evening. It reminds me of our first meeting among the ruins of that ancient abbey in Silesia, my initiation, the oaths I pronounced to you, my judge, my examiner, afterwards my master, now my friend and brother, dear Albert! What singular and fatal vicissitudes have passed over our heads since then! Both dead to our families, our countries, it may be to our loves! What is to become of us, and what, henceforth, will be our lives among men?"

"Yours may yet be bright and intoxicating, my dear Trenck. The power of the tyrant who hates you, has, thank God, its limits in Europe."

"But my Amelia, Albert? Is it possible that she will remain eternally and hopelessly faithful?"

"You should not desire it, my friend; but it is only too certain that her passion will be as lasting as her misfortunes."

"Speak to me of her, Albert! Happier than I, you can see her and hear her!"

"I have no longer that privilege, dear Trenck, do not deceive yourself on this point. The fantastical name and eccentric bearing of Trismegistus, with which I was invested, and which protected me for many years during my short and mysterious relationship with the palace at Berlin, have lost their prestige; my friends would still be discreet, and my dupes (for in aid of our cause and your love I have been obliged to make some innocent dupes) would not be more clear-sighted than in the past; but Frederick suspects a conspiracy, and I can no longer return to Prussia. My efforts would be paralysed by his distrust, and the prison of Spandau would not a second time open for my escape."

"Poor Albert! you must have suffered as much in this prison as I in mine; perhaps more!"

"No! for I was near her. I heard her voice. I laboured for her escape. I neither regret the horrors of imprisonment, nor my fears for her life. If I suffered for myself, I was not aware of it; if I suffered for her, I no longer remember it. She is saved, and she will be happy."

"Through you, Albert? Tell me that she will only be happy through you and with you, or I will no longer hold her in esteem; I will withdraw from her my admiration and friendship."

"Do not speak thus, Trenck. It is an outrage against nature, love, and Heaven."

"I know it, and without pretending to the same virtue as yours, I feel that if Amelia had withdrawn her vows from me instead of confirming them, I should not for that have ceased to love her, and to bless the days of happiness she has given me; but I am at least free to love you more than myself, and to hate whoever does not love you. You smile, Albert; you do not understand my friendship, and I do not understand your courage. Ah! if it be true that she who

has received your faith is in love (even before the expiration of her mourning) with one of our brothers, were it the most deserving among us, and the most seductive man in the world, I could never forgive her. Do you forgive her if you can!"

"Trenck! Trenck! you know not of what you speak; you cannot understand, and I may not explain. Suspend your judgment upon this admirable woman; hereafter you will know her."

"And who prevents you from justifying her to me? Speak! Why this mystery? We are alone here. Your avowal cannot compromise her, and no oaths that I know of can bind you to conceal what we all suspect from your conduct. She loves you no longer; what can be her excuse?"

"Did she ever love me?"

"This is her crime. She never understood you."

"She could not, and I was unable to reveal myself to her. Besides, I was ill, mad; and madmen are not loved, but feared and dreaded."

"You were never mad, Albert; I never saw you so. On the contrary, your wisdom and strength of intellect always dazzled me."

"You saw me firm, and master over myself in action; you never saw me in the agony of repose, in the tortures of discouragement."

"Have you known discouragement, then? I should never have thought it."

"That is because you do not perceive the dangers, the obstacles, the vices of our enterprise. You have never penetrated to the depths of that abyss into which I have cast my whole soul and existence; you have seen only its generous and chivalrous side; you have embraced only its easy labours and sparkling hopes."

"That is because I am less great, less enthusiastic, and, must it be spoken, less fanatical, than you, noble count! You have desired to drain the cup of zeal to the dregs, and when its bitterness has choked you, you have doubted heaven and earth."

"Yes, I have doubted, and I have been cruelly punished."

"And do you doubt still? Will you ever suffer?"

"Now I hope, I believe, I act. I feel strong and happy.

Do you not see joy sparkling in my face and delight dwelling in my bosom?"

"And yet you are betrayed by your beloved? What do I say? By your wife?"

"She was never either the one or the other. She never owed me anything; she never betrayed me. May God send her love, the divinest of gifts, in recompense for the moment of pity she showed me on my death-bed! And I—in gratitude to her for having closed my eyes, for having given me tears, for having blessed me on the threshold of eternity, which I believed I was about to cross—shall I claim a promise drawn from compassionate generosity, from sublime charity? Shall I say to her, 'Woman, I am your master; you belong to me by law; by the rights your imprudent error has bestowed. You must submit to my embraces, because, in a day of separation, you imprinted a farewell kiss upon my icy brow! You must place your hand in mine for ever, follow in my steps, submit to my yoke, crush the young love in your bosom, overcome an insurmountable passion, and waste away with regrets in my profane arms, pressed to my selfish and cowardly heart?" Oh, Trenck! do you think I could find happiness in acting thus? Would not my life be one of more bitter suffering even than hers? Is not the suffering of the slave the curse of the master? Lives there a being so vile, so brutal, as to exult in a love unshared; in a fidelity against which the heart of the victim revolts? Thank Heaven, I am not that being, and never can become so! I was going this night to find Consuelo, to tell her all these things; to restore to her her liberty. But I could not find her in the garden where she usually walks; the storm came, and deprived me of the hope of seeing her. I was unwilling to penetrate to her apartments; I should have entered them with the right of a husband. The slightest shudder of terror, the very paleness of her despair, would have caused me such pain that I could not resolve to run the risk."

"And did you not meet the black mask of Liverani in the gloom?"

"Who is this Liverani?"

"Do you not know the name of your rival?"

"Liverani is a false name. Do you know him; this man —this happy rival?"

"No. But you put this question with a singular air

Albert, I believe I understand you: you forgive your unfortunate wife, you abandon her, and you are right; but you will, I hope, punish the coward who has stolen her affections."

"Are you sure he is a coward?"

"What! the man to whose care her escape from prison, and the safety of her person were confided during a long and perilous journey! He who should have protected, respected her, who should not have addressed a single word to her, nor have disclosed his face! A man invested with the power and the blind confidence of the Invisibles! like myself, a brother in arms and mutual vows! Oh! if your wife had been confided to me, Albert, I should not even have dreamed of the culpable treachery of winning her love!"

"Trenck, once more, you know not of what you speak. But three men among us know who this Liverani is, and what is his crime. In a few days you will cease to hate and revile this happy mortal, to whom God, in His goodness, in His justice, perhaps, has given the love of Consuelo."

"Singular and sublime man! You do not hate him then?"

"I cannot."

"You will not interfere with his happiness?"

"On the contrary, I work ardently to assure it; and yet there is nothing either sublime or singular in this. You will smile before long at the praises you are bestowing upon me."

"What! you do not even suffer?"

"I am the happiest of men."

"In that case, you have but little love for her, or you have ceased to love her altogether. Such heroism is not in human nature; it is all but monstrous; and I cannot admire what I do not understand. Stay, count, you are amusing yourself at my expense; I am very dull; but at last I understand you. You love another; and you bless Providence for having released you from your engagements with Consuelo by rendering her unfaithful."

"Then you will oblige me to open my heart to you, baron. Listen; it is a history, a romance, that I have to relate; but it is cold here; this bramble fire cannot warm these old walls, and besides, I fear that they may remind you of those of Glatz. The weather is clearing, we can continue our way

to the château; and since you are leaving it at daybreak, I will not detain you too late. As we walk along, I will tell you a strange tale."

The two friends took up their hats, from which they shook the rain-drops, and kicking the logs to extinguish them, quitted the tower arm-in-arm. Their voices became lost in the distance, and the echoes of the old mansion quickly ceased to repeat the faint noise of their footsteps upon the damp grass of the court-yard.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Consuelo remained plunged in a species of stupor. That which astonished her the most, of which the evidence of her senses could scarcely persuade her, was, not the magnanimous conduct of Albert, nor his heroic sentiments, but the miraculous facility with which he himself unrolled the terrible problem of the destiny that involved him. Was happiness then so easy for Consuelo? Was the love of Liverani legitimate? She thought she must have dreamed what she had just heard. Was she already permitted to abandon herself to her love for the unknown? The austere Invisibles placed him on an equality with Albert, for the greatness of his soul, for his courage and virtue; Albert himself justified and defended him against the reproaches of Trenck. In short, Albert and the Invisibles, far from condemning their mutual passion, abandoned them to their own wills, to their invincible sympathy for each other; and all this without contest, without trouble, without giving cause for regret or remorse without occasioning a tear to any human being! Consuelo, trembling more from the effects of fear than cold, descended to the apartment below, and kindled anew the fire which Albert and Trenck had just dispersed about the hearth. Her eyes rested on the impressions of their wet feet upon the dusty floor; it was an evidence of the reality of their appearance which she needed. Crouched beneath the arch of the fire-place, like the dreamy Cinderella, the *protégée* of the hearth spirits, she fell into a profound meditation. So easy a triumph over des-

tiny did not appear to be made for her. Still no doubt could prevail against the marvellous serenity of Albert. This serenity was precisely the thing Consuelo could least disbelieve. Albert did not suffer; his love did not revolt against his sense of justice. He accomplished, with a species of enthusiastic joy, the greatest sacrifice it is in the power of man to offer to God. The strange virtue of this singular man struck Consuelo with surprise and terror. She asked herself if such freedom from human weakness were reconcilable with human affections. This evident insensibility, did it not betoken some new phase of delirium in Albert? After the aggravated evils which painful remembrance and exclusive feeling had engendered, was he not under the influence of a species of paralysis of the heart and memory? Could he be so quickly cured of his love, or was this love so slight a thing, that a simple act of the will, a simple decision of reason, was sufficient to efface its lightest trace? While admiring this triumph of philosophy, Consuelo could not avoid a feeling of humiliation, as she thus saw a long-cherished passion, which she had justly been proud of inspiring, destroyed, as it were, by a breath. She retraced the slightest words he had uttered, and the expression of his face as he pronounced them was still before her eyes. It was an expression unknown to Consuelo. Albert was as much changed in his outward appearance as in his feelings. To speak the truth, he was a new man; and but for the sound of his voice, the outline of his features, but for the truth of what he said being confirmed by facts, Consuelo might well have thought that she saw in his place the pretended Sosie, the imaginary personage Trismegistus, whom the doctor had persisted in substituting for Albert. The improvement which renewed health and a state of calm had worked in Albert's outward appearance, seemed to confirm the error of Supperville. He had lost much of his frightful thinness, and appeared to have grown, so upright and elastic had his languid and stooping figure become. His walk had also undergone a change; his movements were more supple, his step firmer, his carriage as elegant and possessed, as it had before been careless and neglected. Every thing about him astonished Consuelo. In former days he never would have thought of making a fire; he would have pitied his friend Trenck for being wet, but so indifferent had all exterior objects and

material cares become to him, that he would never have dreamed of gathering the scattered logs together, neither would he have shaken his hat before replacing it on his head, but would have allowed the rain to trickle down his long hair in perfect unconsciousness. Lastly, he carried a sword, when formerly he would never have consented to handle this weapon, this symbol of hatred and murder, even in play; now it did not impede his movements; he saw the blade glittering in the light of the fire, and yet it failed to recall the blood shed by his forefathers. The expiation imposed upon Jean Ziska, in his person, was a gloomy dream, which a tranquil sleep had, at last, entirely effaced, and of which, perhaps, he had even lost the recollection with the departed memories of his life and love, which seemed as things that had been, but which were now no portion of his life.

An undefined, an inexplicable feeling, took possession of Consuelo; a feeling which at once resembled grief, regret, and wounded pride. She repeated Trenck's supposition of some new love on the part of Albert, and this idea seemed to her probable. A new love alone could inspire him with such tolerance and mercy. His last words as he led his friend away, promising a recital, a romance, were they not confirmatory of this supposition, the avowal and explanation of the solemn and profound joy with which he appeared to be filled?

"Yes, his eyes flashed with a light I never saw in them," thought Consuelo; "his smile had an expression of triumph, of intoxication; and he smiled, almost laughed; he to whom laughter ever seemed unknown. There was even a tone of irony in his voice, as he said to the baron, 'You will smile before long at the praises you are bestowing upon me.' There is no doubt he loves, but it is no longer me. He does not even struggle against it; he blesses my infidelity; he urges me on, he rejoices in it, he no longer blushes for me; he abandons me to a weakness I alone blush for, and all the shame of which will fall on my head. Oh, Heaven! I was not alone culpable. Albert was yet more culpable than I! Alas! why have I surprised the secret of a generosity I should have so admired, and which I never would have accepted. Now do I feel that there is something holy in plighted faith. God only, who changes our hearts, can free

us from it. Thus the beings united by an oath may, perhaps, offer and accept the sacrifice of their rights. But when mutual inconstancy alone presides at a divorce, there is something terrible in it; it is, as it were, a partnership in parricide between two human beings, who coldly kill in their bosoms the love which united them."

Consuelo regained the wood by the early light of morning. She had remained during the night in the tower, absorbed by a thousand gloomy and sorrowful thoughts. She had no difficulty in finding her way back to her abode, though she had passed the road in the dark, and the rapidity of her flight had made it appear less long than she found it on returning. She descended the hill, and ascended the course of the river till she came to the grating, which she skilfully crossed, being now neither alarmed nor agitated. She cared little for being seen, determined as she was to relate all to her confessor. Moreover, her past life occupied her thoughts so much, that the present offered her but a secondary interest. Even Liverani scarcely existed for her. Thus is the human heart constituted; young love has need of dangers and obstacles to nourish it; a dead love revives when it no longer depends upon ourselves to kindle it in the heart of another.

This time the invisible guardians of Consuelo seemed to have fallen asleep, for it did not appear that her nocturnal ramble had been observed by any one. She found a fresh letter from the unknown in her instrument, as tenderly respectful as that of the preceding evening had been bold and impassioned. He complained of her fear of him, and reproached her for having shut herself up in her apartments as though in dread of his timid veneration. He humbly begged that she would allow him to see her in the garden at twilight, promising not to speak to her, nor even to show himself, if she desired otherwise.

"Whether it be that he has ceased to love you, or that his conscience upbraids him," added he, "Albert renounces all pretensions to you, tranquilly, apparently even with indifference. Duty speaks louder than love in his heart. In a few days the Invisibles will signify his resolution to you, and will pronounce the signal of your liberty. You can then remain here to be initiated into their mysteries, if you still persist in this generous intention, and until then I will keep my oath

not to disclose myself to your eyes. But if you have only made this promise out of compassion to me, if you desire to be set free from it, speak, and I will break all my engagements to fly with you. I am not Albert: love is stronger with me than virtue. Choose!"

"Yes, that is certain," said Consuelo, as she allowed the letter of the unknown to fall upon the keys of her harpsichord; "this man loves me, and Albert does not. It is possible that he never loved me, and that my image was but a creation of his delirium. And yet how sublime this love appeared to me; would to Heaven that it were still strong enough to conquer mine by a painful and sublime sacrifice! Better thus for Liverani to be abandoned by me, though at the cost of suffering and struggle, than to be accepted as a necessity in the hour of isolation, indignation, shame, and sorrow."

She replied to Liverani in a few words:

"I am too proud and too sincere to deceive you. I know Albert's thoughts and his resolution. I surprised the secrets of his confidence with an unknown friend. He abandons me without regret, and it is not virtue alone which triumphs over his love. I will not follow the example he sets me. I love you, and yet I renounce you without entertaining love for another. I owe this sacrifice to my dignity, to my conscience. I hope you will no longer approach my abode. If, yielding to a blind passion, you seek to draw from me some fresh avowal, you will repent the attempt. You will perhaps owe my confidence to the just anger of a broken heart, to the terror of a bewildered soul. This would be torture both to you and to me. If you persist, Liverani, your love is not what I have dreamed it to be."

Nevertheless, Liverani persisted; he wrote again, and was eloquent, persuasive, sincere in his humility.

"You make an appeal to my pride," said he, "and I have no pride with you. Should you, in my arms, regret one absent, I should suffer, but I should not be offended. I would implore you, prostrated at your feet in tears, to forget him and trust in me only. However you might love, in however small a degree, I should be grateful as for an immense happiness."

Such was the substance of many following letters, ardent yet timid, submissive yet persevering. Consuelo felt her

pride giving way before the charm of a true passion. Insensibly she accustomed herself to the idea that she had never before been so ardently loved, not even by the Count de Rudolstadt, and in this belief repulsed the involuntary disappointment she had experienced at the outrage offered to the sacredness of her memory, fearing, by any manifestation of it, that she might become an obstacle to the happiness Albert might propose to himself in a new love. She resolved, then, to accept in silence the decree of separation which he appeared desirous to obtain of the tribunal of the Invisibles, and abstained from any further tracing of his name in the replies she addressed to the unknown, desiring him to imitate this reserve.

The heat of summer was beginning to make itself felt, and Consuelo, absorbed by her studies, had but the cool hours of evening for repose and refreshment. By degrees she had returned to her slow and dreamy promenades in the garden and park. She believed herself alone, and yet some vague emotion would at times bring the idea that the unknown was not far from her. The beautiful nights, the noble shadows, the solitude, the languishing murmur of the water running through the flowers, the perfume of the plants, the impassioned note of the nightingale, followed by a yet more voluptuous silence; the large oblique rays of moonlight piercing through the transparent shadows of balmy arbours; the setting of the evening star behind the rosy clouds of the horizon, all those emotions, classical, but eternally fresh and powerful where youth and love are to be found, plunged the soul of Consuelo into dangerous reveries. The shadow of her slender figure upon the bright walks, the flight of a bird awakened by her approach, the noise of a leaf agitated by the breeze, was enough to make her tremble and hasten her steps; but these slight terrors were scarcely dissipated ere they were replaced by an undefinable regret, and the trepidations of hope were stronger than all the suggestions of evil. Once she was alarmed more than usual by the rustling of the leaves and the uncertain noises of night. It appeared to her that some one was walking not far from her; that whoever it was, fled at her approach, and drew near when she was seated. Her inward agitation warned her still more; she felt herself powerless against a meeting in this beautiful spot and beneath this magnificent sky. The breeze passed

burning across her brow. She fled towards the pavilion, and shut herself up in her chamber. The candles were not lighted. She hid herself behind a blind, and ardently desired to see him by whom she would not allow herself to be seen. Soon, indeed, she saw a man walking slowly beneath her windows, without speaking, or making a sign, apparently submissive, and satisfied by only looking at the walls she inhabited. This man was, indeed, the unknown; at least, Consuelo divined so at first by her own agitation, though she thought afterwards that she recognised him by his carriage and walk. But soon strange doubts and painful fears took possession of her mind. This silent figure reminded her of Albert at least as much as of Liverani. They were of the same stature; and now that Albert, transformed by improved health, walked with ease, and no longer drooped his head upon his breast, or held it upon his hand in an attitude of grief or illness, Consuelo could no longer distinguish his appearance from that of the chevalier. She had seen this last for one moment by daylight, walking before her at some distance, and wrapped in the folds of a cloak. She had seen Albert also for a few moments in the deserted tower since he had changed from what she knew him; and now she saw either the one or the other indistinctly by the light of the stars, and each time as she thought herself upon the point of putting an end to her doubts, he passed beneath the shadow of the trees, and himself was lost like a shadow. At last he disappeared altogether, and Consuelo remained divided between joy and fear, reproaching herself for having wanted courage to call Albert at all risks, that she might have provoked a sincere and loyal explanation between them.

This repentance became more lively in proportion as the person withdrew, while the conviction that it was indeed Albert whom she had just seen strengthened. Led on by that habit of devotion which had ever held the place of love for him, she said to herself, that if he thus came wandering about her, it was in the timid hope of an interview. This was not the first time he had sought one: he had said to Trenck one evening; or perhaps he had withdrawn into the dark with Liverani. Consuelo resolved to provoke this necessary explanation. Her conscience imposed it upon her as a huty to clear up her doubts as to the true disposition of her dusband. She returned to the garden, and ran after him

trembling, yet full of courage; but she had lost all traces of him, and scoured the park without meeting him. At last, as she was issuing from a grove, she suddenly saw a man standing on the brink of the river. Was it indeed he whom she was seeking? She called aloud the name of Albert; he trembled, passed his hands across his face, and when he turned, the black mask already crossed his features.

"Albert, is it you?" cried Consuelo; "it is you, you alone, whom I seek."

A stifled exclamation betrayed some emotion of joy and grief with the unknown. He appeared about to fly, but Consuelo believing she had recognised the voice of Albert, rushed towards him, and held him back by his cloak. But she hesitated: the cloak in opening allowed a small silver cross, which Consuelo knew but too well, to be seen on the breast of the unknown; it was one which had belonged to her mother, the same which she had confided to the chevalier during her journey with him, as a token of gratitude and sympathy.

"Liverani," said she, "it is ever you! Since it is you, adieu! Why have you disobeyed me?"

He threw himself at her feet, with such ardent yet respectful warmth, that Consuelo had no longer the strength to repulse him.

"If you love me, and if you desire that I should love you, leave me," said she; "it is before the Invisibles that I will see and hear you. Your mask terrifies me; your silence chills my heart."

Liverani lifted his hands to the mask; he was about to tear it off and to speak. Consuelo, like the curious Psyche, had no longer courage to close her eyes; but suddenly the black veil of the messengers of the secret tribunal fell upon her head. The hand of the unknown, which had hastily seized hers, was silently detached. Consuelo felt herself led away without violence or apparent anger; they raised her from the ground, and she felt beneath her feet the planks of a boat. She descended the river for some time, no one addressing a word to her; and when she was restored to the light, she found herself in a subterranean apartment, where she had been summoned for the first time before the tribunal of the Invisibles.

The whole seven were there, as upon the first occasion,

masked, silent, impenetrable as phantoms. The eighth personage, who had formerly addressed Consuelo, and who seemed to be the interpreter of the council and the initiator of the adepts, addressed her in these terms:—

"Consuelo, you have already undergone trials from which you have issued to your own glory and our satisfaction. We can, therefore, accord you our confidence, and we are about to prove this to you."

"Stay," said Consuelo, "you think me without reproach, and I am not. I have disobeyed you; I have left the retreat you assigned me."

"From curiosity?"

"No."

"Can you tell us what you learned?"

"What I learned concerned myself only; there is among you a confessor to whom I can and wish to reveal it."

The old man whom Consuelo thus invoked, rose and said—

"I know all. The fault of this child is trivial. She knows nothing of what you would keep from her. The confession of her feelings must be sacred to our two selves. In the mean time profit by the present opportunity; let all she has to know be revealed to her at once. I will answer for her in all things."

Then turning towards Consuelo, he continued—

"Our work is grand, our task is immense. We would not only found a universal empire of a new order and upon equitable bases, but we would reconstruct a religion. We feel, moreover, that the one is impossible without the other. Thus we have two modes of action: the one material, to undermine and destroy the ancient world by criticism, by examination, even by raillery, by Voltarianism, and all connected with it. The formidable emulation of bold wills and strong passions precipitates our steps in that direction. Our other mode of action is entirely spiritual, and devotes itself to the foundation of the religion of the future. The *élite* of the intellectual and the virtuous assist us in this unceasing labour of our thoughts. The work of the Invisibles is a council which the persecutions of the official world prevent from meeting in public, but which deliberates incessantly, and which labours under the same inspiration in all points of the civilised world. Mysterious communications convey the

seed into the air as fast as it ripens, and sow it again in the field of humanity as fast as we free it from the ear. It is with this subterranean labour that you may become associated; we will tell you how when you shall have accepted it."

"I accept it now," replied Consuelo, in a firm voice, and stretching out her arm in token of an oath.

"Be not in such haste to promise, woman of generous instincts, of enterprising soul! You may not possess all the virtues which such a mission demands. You have travelled through the world; you have already derived therefrom notions of prudence, of what is called *savoir-vivre*, discretion, rectitude."

"Stay," said Consuelo. "Your reply will decide my destiny, but will you allow me to question you for once, for the first and last time?"

"You see! already you hesitate, already you seek for guarantee elsewhere than in the spontaneous inspiration and enthusiasm of your heart towards the idea we represent. Nevertheless, speak! The question you would put to us will enlighten us as to the disposition of your mind."

"This is it. Is Albert initiated into all your secrets?"

"Yes."

"Without any restriction?"

"Without any restriction."

"And he labours with you?"

"Say, rather, that we labour with him. He is one of the lights of our council; perhaps the purest, the most divine."

"Why did you not tell me this at first? I should not have hesitated a moment. Conduct me where you will; my life is at your disposal. I am yours, and I swear it to you."

"We are satisfied with your answers, and we accept the oath you have just made. We are now about to instruct you as to your duties towards God and us. Learn, then, at once the three words which contain the secret of our mysteries, and which are not often revealed to our disciples until after many delays and precautions. You have no need of a long apprenticeship, and yet you will need reflection to understand the whole meaning. Liberty, fraternity, equality: this is the mysterious and profound formula of the work of the Invisibles."

"After all you have just told me I am no longer free to draw back," replied Consuelo, after a moment's silence. "The

first scruple may lead me into a series of reservations and terrors which may end in cowardice. I have received your austere confidences; I feel that I no longer belong to myself. Alas! yes, I confess it, I shall often suffer from the part you impose upon me, for I have already suffered bitterly from being obliged to deceive Frederick, that I might save my friends from danger. Allow me, for the last time—the blush of a soul virgin to all deception—allow me to weep for the candour of my ignorant and peaceful youth. I cannot help these regrets, but I shall know how to guard myself against tardy and pusillanimous remorse. I must no longer be the useless and inoffensive child of the past; already have I ceased to be so, since here I am, placed between the necessity of conspiring against the oppressors of humanity, and of betraying its deliverers. I have touched the tree of knowledge; its fruits are bitter, but I will not cast them from me. Knowledge is a misfortune; but to refuse to act, when we know what ought to be done, is a crime."

"That is spoken with wisdom and courage," replied the initiator. "We are satisfied with you. To-morrow evening we will proceed with your initiation. Prepare yourself through the day for a new baptism; for a solemn oath, by meditation and prayer, even by confession, if your soul be not free from all personal pre-occupation."

CHAPTER XXV.

Consuelo was awakened at break of day by the sounds of horns and the barking of dogs. When Matteus came to bring her breakfast he informed her that a large *battue* of deer and wild boars was about to take place in the forest. More than a hundred guests, he said, had assembled at the château, to take part in this noble sport. Consuelo understood that a great number of the members of the order had assembled together under the pretence of hunting at this château, the principal rendezvous of their most important meetings. She was somewhat alarmed at the idea that all these men might, perhaps, be witnesses of her initiation, and

asked herself if it were indeed a matter of sufficient interest in the eyes of the order, to draw together so large a concourse of its members. She endeavoured to read and meditate, in obedience to the prescription of the initiator; but her attention was even more distracted by vague fears and inward emotion, than by the horns, the galloping of the horses, and the baying of the hounds, whose echoes filled the surrounding woods throughout the day. This hunt, was it real, or did it serve but as a blind? Was Albert such a convert to the habits of ordinary life as to take part in it, and shed without terror the blood of innocent beasts? Liverani, would he not quit this party of pleasure, and, under cover of the confusion, come to trouble the neophyte in the depths of her retreat?

Consuelo saw nothing of what was passing without, and Liverani did not come. Matteus, too occupied, doubtless, at the château, to think of her, failed to bring her dinner. Was this, as Supperville pretended, a fast imposed for the purpose of weakening the mental powers of the adept? She resigned herself to her fate.

Towards night, upon her return to the library, which she had quitted for an hour to take the air, she drew back with terror at the sight of a man dressed in red, and wearing a mask, seated upon her couch; but she was speedily reassured, as she recognised the feeble old man who served her, so to speak, as her spiritual father.

"My child," said he, rising and coming towards her, "have you nothing to say to me? Have I still your confidence?"

"You have, monsieur," replied Consuelo, causing him to re-seat himself upon the couch, and taking a footstool by his side, in the recess of the window. "I earnestly desire to speak to you, and have wished to do so for a long time."

Then she faithfully related to him all that had passed between herself, Albert, and the unknown, since her last confession, concealing from him none of the involuntary emotions she had experienced.

After she had finished, the old man kept silence so long as to trouble and embarrass Consuelo. He at length replied—

"When a mother marries her daughter, she half reveals to her, with more or less of discretion and modesty, the mysteries which heretofore she has concealed from her. A

mother was wanting to you, when you pronounced with an enthusiasm more fanatical than human, the oath to belong to a man whom you loved incompletely. A mother is given you to-day to assist and enlighten you in your new resolutions at the hour of divorce, or at the definitive sanction of this strange hymen. This mother is myself, Consuelo; I who am not a man, but a woman."

"You a woman?" said Consuelo, looking with surprise at the hand, thin and blue, but delicate and truly feminine, which had taken hers during this discourse.

"This little withered old man," replied the problematical confessor, "this decrepid and suffering being, in whose feeble voice there is no sex, is a woman broken down by grief, illness, and anxiety, more than by age. I am not more than sixty, Consuelo, though in this dress, which I never wear out of my functions as an Invisible, I have the appearance of an imbecile octogenarian. However, in the dress of my sex as in this, I am no longer anything but a ruin; yet I was a tall, strong, handsome woman, of imposing exterior. But at thirty years old I was already bent and trembling as you see me now. And do you know, my child, the cause of that precocious feebleness? It was the misfortune from which I would preserve you. It was an incomplete affection, an unhappy union; it was a terrible effort of courage and resignation, which attached me for ten years to a man whom I esteemed and respected, but whom I was unable to love. Now, then, open to me your entire soul. Tell me if this Liverani——"

"Alas! I love this Liverani; it is but too true," said Consuelo, carrying the hand of the mysterious sibyl to her lips. "His presence causes me yet more confusion than that of Albert; but how different is this confusion, and how mingled is it with strange delights! His arms are a magnet which attracts me; and his kiss upon my forehead causes me to enter another world, where I breathe, where I exist differently than in this."

"Well, Consuelo, you must love this man and forget the other. I from this moment pronounce your divorce; it is my duty and my right."

"Spite of what you have told me, I cannot accept this sentence before I have seen Albert, before he has spoken to me,

and told me himself that he renounces me without regret, that he returns my oath without contempt."

"You do not yet know Albert, or you fear him; but I know him, I, who have rights over him still more than over you, and I can speak in his name. We are alone, Consuelo, and it is not forbidden me to disclose myself to you entirely, though I am one of the supreme council, whom their nearest disciples never know. But my situation and yours are exceptional; look upon my faded features, and tell me if they seem altogether unknown to you."

Thus speaking, the sibyl at the same time detached her mask and false beard, her cap and false hair, and Consuelo saw the head of a woman, old and indicative of suffering, it is true, but of an incomparable beauty of feature, and with a sublime expression of goodness, sadness, and strength. These three qualities of the soul, so opposite, and so rarely united in the same being, were depicted in the vast forehead, in the maternal smile, and in the profound look of the unknown. The form of her head and the lower part of her face announced a great power of primitive organisation; but the ravages of grief were but too visible, and a sort of nervous trembling kept in motion this beautiful head, which recalled that of the dying Niobe, or rather that of Mary fainting at the foot of the cross. Grey hair, fine and smooth as virgin silk, parted on her large brow, and confined in small bandeaux on the temples, completed the noble strangeness of that captivating face. At that period women wore their hair powdered and frizzled, and drawn back so as to leave the forehead bare and prominent. The sibyl had tied hers so that it might be as little embarrassing as possible under her disguise, without reflecting that she was at the same time adopting the most harmonious style for the form and expression of her face. Consuelo contemplated her for a few moments with admiration and respect. Then, suddenly struck with surprise, she cried, seizing both her hands—

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* how you resemble him!"

"Yes, I resemble Albert, or rather Albert resembles me prodigiously," she replied; "but have you never seen a portrait of me?"

Perceiving that Consuelo was making an effort of memory, she added, by way of assisting her—

"A portrait which resembles me as much as art is permit-

ted to approach reality, and of which now I am but the shadow; a large portrait of a young, fresh, and brilliant woman, with a corsage of gold brocade, ornamented with flowers in jewels, a mantle of purple, and black hair escaping from clasps of rubies and pearls, to fall in curls upon the shoulders; it is the costume I wore forty years ago, on the day after my marriage. I was handsome, but I was not to remain so long; already death was in my soul."

"The portrait of which you speak," said Consuelo, turning pale, "is in the Château des Géants, in the chamber Albert occupied. It is that of his mother, whom he had scarcely known, and whom, nevertheless, he adored, and whom he thought he saw and heard in his ecstacies. Are you, then, a near relation to the noble Wanda de Prachalitz, and thus——"

"I am Wanda de Prachalitz herself," replied the sibyl, something of firmness suddenly returning to her voice and attitude; "I am the mother of Albert, and the widow of Christian de Rudolstadt; I am the descendant of Jean Ziska of the Chalice, and the mother-in-law of Consuelo; but I wish no longer to be anything but her friend and her adopted mother, since Consuelo does not love Albert, and Albert must not be happy at the price of the happiness of his companion."

"His mother! you his mother?" cried Consuelo, trembling, and falling at the knees of Wanda. "Are you, then, a spectre? Were you not mourned as dead in the Château des Géants?"

"It is twenty-seven years," replied the sibyl, "since Wanda of Prachalitz, Countess of Rudolstadt, was buried in the Château des Géants. in the same chapel, and beneath the same flag, where Albert de Rudolstadt, attacked by the same malady, and subject to the same cataleptic crises, was buried last year, the victim of the same error. The son would never have risen from this frightful tomb if the mother, attentive to the danger which threatened him, had not, herself invisible, watched over his agony, and presided with anguish at his interment. It was his mother who saved a being, still full of life and strength, from the worms of the sepulchre, to which he had been already abandoned; it was his mother who rescued him from the yoke of the world, where he had lived but too long, and in which he could no

longer live, to transport him into this mysterious world, into this impenetrable asylum, where she had herself recovered, if not health of body, at least the health of the soul. It is a strange history, Consuelo; and you must know it, that you may understand that of Albert, his sad life, his pretended death, and his miraculous resurrection. The Invisibles will not open their meeting for your initiation until midnight. Listen then to me; and may the emotion of this strange recital prepare you for those which yet await you.

"Rich, beautiful, and of an illustrious birth, I was married at twenty to the Count Christian, who already numbered forty years. He might have been my father, and he inspired me with affection and respect, but not with love. I have been brought up in ignorance of what such a feeling might be in the life of a woman. My relations, austere Lutherans, but obliged to exercise their faith in secret, displayed in their habits and ideas an excessive rigidity, and a great strength of soul. Their hatred of foreigners, their secret revolt against the religious and political yoke of Austria, their fanatical attachment to the ancient freedom of their country, had passed into my bosom, and these passions were sufficient to my youthful pride. I never suspected the existence of others; and my mother, who knew nothing beyond duty, would have thought it a crime to enlighten me. The Emperor Charles, the father of Maria Theresa, for a long time persecuted my family on account of their heresy, and set a price upon our fortune, our liberty, and almost our lives. I could release my parents by marrying a Catholic nobleman devoted to the empire, and to this end I sacrificed myself with a species of enthusiastic pride. From among those who were then pointed out to me, I chose the Count Christian, because his character, gentle, conciliating, and even apparently weak, gave me the hope of secretly converting him to the political opinions of my family. My family accepted my devotion, and blessed me for it. I thought that virtue would suffice for my happiness; but an unhappiness, whose extent we understand, and whose injustice we feel, is not a medium adapted for the favourable development of the soul. I soon saw that the wise and calm Christian concealed beneath his gentle benevolence an invincible obstinacy, a bigoted attachment to the customs of his sect, and to the prejudices of his rank; a species of pitying hatred

and contempt at every idea of resistance to established things. His sister, Wenceslawa, tender, vigilant, generous, but even more addicted than her brother to bigotry in devotion and pride of rank, formed for me a companionship at once sweet and bitter; a caressing but overwhelming tyranny; a friendship devoted, but irritating to the last degree. I suffered mortally in this absence of moral and intellectual sympathy with beings whom, nevertheless, I loved, but whose contact killed me, whose atmosphere by degrees dried up within me the springs of life. You know the history of Albert's youth, his repressed enthusiasm, his misunderstood religion, his evangelical ideas accused of heresy and madness. My life was a prelude to his; and you must sometimes have heard, in the family of Rudolstadt, exclamations of terror and grief at the fatal resemblance, moral and physical, which existed between mother and son. The absence of love was the greatest evil of my life, and it is from this all the rest flowed. I loved Christian with a strong friendship; but there was nothing in him to inspire me with enthusiasm, and an enthusiastic affection alone could have atoned for our intellectual disunion. The religious and severe education I had received did not allow me to separate intellect from love. I fed upon myself. My health became affected; an extraordinary excitement took possession of my nervous system; I was seized with hallucinations, with ecstacies, which they called fits of insanity, and which, instead of seeking to cure, they carefully concealed. Nevertheless they attempted to divert me, and to lead me into the world; as if balls, spectacles, and *fêtes*, could supply to me the want of sympathy, love, and confidence. I became so ill at Vienna that they took me back to the Château des Géants. I preferred this sad abode, the exorcisms of the chaplain, and the cruel friendship of the canoness, to the court of our tyrants.

"The consecutive loss of my five children was a final blow. It seemed to me as though heaven had cursed my marriage, and I ardently desired death. I forced myself not to love Albert, my last-born, persuaded that he, like the rest, was condemned, and that my cares would not avail to save him. A last misfortune put a finishing stroke to the disturbed state of my faculties. I loved, and was beloved, and the austerity of my principles forced me to struggle even

against the inward confession of this terrible feeling. The physician who attended me in my frequent and grievious crises was to all appearance, older, and not so handsome as Christian. They were not then personal graces which touched me, but the profound sympathy of our souls, the conformity of our ideas, or, at least, of our religious and philosophical instincts, and an inconceivable sympathy of character. Marcus, I can indicate him to you but by this name, possessed the same energy, the same activity of mind, the same patriotism as myself. What Shakespere put into the mouth of Brutus might have been said with equal justice of us both; 'I am not of those who bear injustice with a smiling face.' The misery and degradation of the poor, their serfdom, the despotic laws and their monstrous abuses, all the injurious rights of conquest aroused in him tempests of indignation. Oh! what torrents of tears have we not shed together over the misfortunes of our country, over those of the human race, everywhere trampled upon and deceived! Here brutalized by ignorance, there decimated by the rapacity of the avaricious, everywhere violated and crushed by the ravages of war, degraded over the whole face of the earth! Still Marcus, wiser than I, conceived a remedy for all these evils, and often entertained me with strange and mysterious projects for the organization of a universal conspiracy against despotism and intolerance. I listened to his projects as to romantic dreams. I had ceased to hope; I was too ill, too oppressed, to believe in a future. He loved me ardently; I saw it, I felt it, I shared his passion; and yet, during five years of apparent friendship and chaste intimacy, we never revealed to one another the fatal secret which united us. He did not usually reside in the Bœhmer Wald; at least, he was frequently absent under pretence of duties to distant patients, but in fact to organize the conspiracy of which he unceasingly spoke to me without convincing me of its results. Each time I saw him, I felt more inflamed by his genius, his courage, and his perseverance. Each time he returned he found me weaker, consumed by an inward fire, devastated by physical suffering.

"During one of these absences I was attacked with frightful convulsions, to which the vain and ignorant doctor, Wetzelius, whom you know, and who attended me during his absence, gave the name of malignant fever. At the

close of this crisis, I fell into a complete prostration, which they took for death. My pulse ceased to beat, my breathing was imperceptible. Nevertheless, I preserved my consciousness; I heard the prayers of the chaplain, and the sobs of my family. I heard the piercing cries of my only child, of my poor Albert, and I could not make a movement, I could not even see him. They had closed my eyes, and I found it impossible to open them. I asked myself if this were indeed death, and if the soul, deprived of its means of action upon the corpse, preserved in death the consciousness of the sorrows of life and the terrors of the tomb? I heard terrible things around my bed of death; the chaplain, endeavouring to calm the lively and sincere regrets of the canoness, told her that she ought to thank God for all things, and that it was a great happiness for my husband to be delivered from the affliction of my continual agony and the storms of my reprobate soul. He did not make use of such harsh terms, but the meaning was the same, and the canoness listened, and allowed herself by degrees to be convinced. I even heard her, immediately after, trying to console Christian with the same arguments, still more softened in expression, but equally cruel to me. I heard distinctly; I understood horribly. It was, they thought, the will of God that I should not bring up my son, and that he should be withdrawn at so early an age from the poison of heresy with which I was infected. This is what they said to my husband when (pressing Albert to his heart) he cried, 'Poor child! what will become of you without your mother?' The reply of the chaplain was, 'You will bring him up in the fear of God.'

"At last, after three days of silent and motionless despair, I was carried to the tomb, without having recovered the strength to make a sign, without having lost for a moment the certainty of the terrible death that was about to be brought upon me! They covered me with diamonds; they clothed me in my bridal robes, in the magnificent robes you have seen in my portrait. They placed a crown of flowers on my head, a golden crucifix upon my breast, and deposited me in a long sarcophagus of white marble, hewn in the subterranean pavement of the chapel. I felt neither the cold nor the want of air; I lived but in thought.

"Marcus arrived an hour after. His consternation at first deprived him of all reflection. He came mechanically and

threw himself upon my tomb; they dragged him from it; he returned in the night.

"This time he had armed himself with a hammer and a lever. A horrible thought had crossed his mind. He knew the lethargic crises to which I was subject, though he had never known them to last so long or to be so complete; but from his observation of a few moments of this strange state, he concluded the possibility of a terrible error. He had no confidence in the science of Wetzelius. I heard him walking above my head; I recognised his footstep. The noise of the iron raising the stone made me tremble, but I could not utter a cry, not even a sigh. When he raised the veil which covered my face, I was so overcome with the efforts I had just made to call out, that I seemed more dead than ever. He hesitated for some time; he interrogated a thousand times my extinguished breath, my icy hands and heart. I had the stiffness of a corpse I heard him murmur in a voice of agony, 'All then, is over! there is no more hope! Dead, dead! oh Wanda!' Then he let the veil fall, but he did not replace the stone. A terrible silence reigned anew. Had he fainted? Did he abandon me, he also forgetting, in the horror with which the sight of what he had once loved inspired him, to reclose my sepulchre?

"Marcus plunged into a gloomy meditation, formed a project gloomy as his grief, singular as his character: he desired to preserve my corps from the outrages of destruction. He wished to bear it away in secret, to embalm it, to enclose it in a metal coffin, to keep it ever by his side. He asked himself if he possessed the courage; and suddenly in a species of fanatical transport, answered himself in the affirmative. He took me in his arms, and without knowing whether his strength would allow him to carry a corpse so far as his dwelling, distant more than a mile, he deposited me upon the pavement, and replaced the stone with the terrible *sang froid* which acts of delirium often possess. Then enveloping and entirely concealing me in his cloak, he quitted the château, which was not then so carefully closed as now, since in those times no bands of malefactors, rendered desperate by war, had made their appearance in the neighbourhood. I had become so thin, that to tell the truth, I was not a very heavy burden. Marcus crossed the woods, choosing the least frequented paths. He deposited me several times upon the

rocks, overcome with grief and terror even more than with fatigue. He has since told me, that more than once he was seized with horror at this violence to a corpse, and that he was tempted to carry me back to the tomb. At last, arriving at his home, he entered noiselessly through the garden, and bore me, unseen by any one, into an isolated pavilion, which he had converted into a study. It was there only that the joy of finding myself saved, the first emotion of joy I had experienced for ten years, unbound my tongue, and I gave utterance to a feeble exclamation.

"A fresh and violent crisis succeeded this prostration. I found suddenly an exuberant strength; I shrieked and groaned. The servants of Marcus, thinking some one was being assassinated, ran to the spot. He had the presence of mind to throw himself before them, saying that a lady had come to be secretly delivered at his house, and that he would kill anybody who tried to see her, as quickly as he would dismiss from his service whoever should have the misfortune to let fall a word on the subject. This pretext succeeded. I was dangerously ill in the pavilion for three days. Marcus, shut up in it with me, watched over me with a zeal and intelligence worthy of his will. When I was saved, and could collect my ideas, I threw myself into his arms with terror, imagining that we must part, 'Oh, Marcus,' I cried, 'why have you not let me die here, in your arms? If you love me, kill me; to return to my family is worse than death.'

"'Madame,' he replied with firmness, 'you shall never return to them; I have sworn it to God and to myself. Henceforth you are mine. You shall never quit me; or, if go hence, it shall be over my corpse.' This terrible resolution alarmed and pleased me at the same time. I was too agitated and too weak to understand its whole bearing. I listened to it with the submission at once timid and confiding of a child. I allowed myself to be tended and cured, and by degrees I grew accustomed to the idea of never returning to Riesenburg, and never undeceiving them as to my death. Marcus employed all his eloquence to persuade me to this end. He told me that I could not live in this marriage, and that I had no right to return to a certain death. He swore to me that he possessed the means of concealing me from human sight for some time to come, and

from the eyes of those who knew me through my whole life. He promised to watch over my son, and to procure the means of my seeing him in secret. He even gave me certain assurances for the fulfilment of these strange possibilities, and I allowed myself to be convinced. I consented to depart with him, never again to be the Countess de Rudolstadt.

"But at the moment we were about to depart, in the night, Marcus was summoned to the assistance of Albert, who, they said, was dangerously ill. Maternal tenderness, which misfortune seemed to have stifled, rekindled in my bosom. I insisted upon following Marcus to Riesenburg; no human power, not even his, could have dissuaded me from it. I ascended his carriage, and, wrapped in a long veil, I anxiously waited at some distance from the château till he could see my son and bring me tidings. He quickly returned, answering me that the child was in no danger, and urged me to allow him to conduct me home, that he might return and pass the night with Albert. I could not resolve upon this; I determined still to wait concealed behind the gloomy walls of the château, trembling and agitated, while he returned to watch over my son. But scarcely was I alone, when a thousand anxieties devoured me. I imagined that Marcus concealed from me the true situation of Albert; that, perhaps, he was dying; that he might expire without receiving my last kiss. Overpowered by this fatal persuasion, I rushed beneath the portico of the château; a servant whom I met in the court, at sight of me, let fall his torch, and took to flight, making the sign of the cross. My veil concealed my features, but the apparition of a woman in the middle of night sufficed to arouse the superstitious feelings of these credulous servants. They never doubted but that I was the ghost of the unfortunate and impious Wanda. An unhoped-for chance led me to the chamber of my son without meeting a single person, and the canoness had just quitted to seek a medicine ordered by Marcus. My husband, according to custom, had gone to pray in his oratory, instead of acting to arrest the danger. I threw myself upon my son; I pressed him to my bosom. He had no fear of me; he returned my caresses; he had not understood my death. At this moment the chaplain appeared at the threshold of the chamber. Marcus thought all was lost. Still, with a rare presence of mind, he remained motionless, and appeared not to perceive me at his side. The chap-

lain pronounced, in a broken voice, a few words of exorcism, and fell fainting, without having dared to advance a step towards me. Then I resigned myself to flight by another door, and I regained, in the dark, the spot where Marcus had left me. I was re-assured; I had seen Albert relieved; his little hands were moist, and the fire of fever was no longer on his cheeks. The fainting fit and the terror of the chaplain were attributed to a vision. He maintained that he saw me by the side of Marcus, holding my son in my arms. Marcus equally insisted that he had seen nothing. Albert had fallen asleep; but, on the morrow, he asked for me again; and on the following nights, convinced that I was not asleep for ever, as they tried to persuade him, he dreamed of me, thought he saw me once more, and called me by name again and again. From this moment the childhood of Albert was strictly watched, and the superstitious souls of Riesenburg offered up a thousand prayers as an antidote to the fatal assiduities of my phantom around his cradle.

"Marcus took me back to his home before daybreak; we delayed our departure yet another week, and when my son was completely recovered, we quitted Bohemia. From that time I have led a wandering and mysterious life. Ever concealed in my lodgings, ever closely veiled in my journeys, bearing a fictitious name, and having for a long time no confidant in the world but Marcus, I passed several years with him in foreign countries. He kept up a correspondence with a friend who informed him of all that took place at Riesenburg, and who gave him ample details as to the health, character, and education of my son. The deplorable state of my health authorised me to lead the most retired life, and to see no one. I passed for the sister of Marcus, and I lived several years in the interior of Italy, in an isolated villa, while during a portion of each year, Marcus continued his travels, and pursued the accomplishment of his vast projects.

"I have as yet said nothing to you of the mental labours and the serious occupations which, for the first fifteen years, prevented us from being absorbed by our sufferings, and which, since that time, have prevented our regretting them. You know their nature, their aim, and their result; you were initiated into them last night; you will be still further enlightened this evening by the organ of the Invisibles. I can then only tell you that Marcus will be seated among

them, and that he has himself formed their secret council and organised their whole society, with the assistance of a virtuous prince, whose fortune is consecrated to the great and mysterious enterprise with which you are acquainted. I have equally consecrated my whole life to it for the last fifteen years. After twelve years of absence I was too much forgotten on the one hand, too much changed on the other, not to re-appear with safety in Germany. The strange life which is annexed to certain functions of our order, moreover, favoured my incognito. Charged, not with the active propagandism, which is reserved for your brilliant life, but with secret missions, which my prudence might effect, I took several journeys, as I just now related to you. Since then, I have lived here in perfect concealment, exercising to all appearance the obscure functions of housekeeper in a portion of the prince's house; but in reality occupied solely with the secret work, holding a vast correspondence, in the name of the council, with all the important adepts; receiving them here, and often presiding at their conferences alone with Marcus, when the prince and other supreme chiefs are absent; in short, exercising at all times a sufficiently marked influence over all those decisions which seem to call for the delicate perception and the peculiar sense with which the female mind is gifted. Apart from the philosophical questions which are often agitated here, and upon which, moreover, I have acquired, by the maturity of my understanding, the right of pronouncing an opinion, there are frequently questions of feeling to be discussed and judged. You can well imagine, that in our attempts abroad, we often meet with the assistance or the opposition of particular passions, love, hatred, or jealousy. Through the medium of my son, and even in person, and by means of the deceptions which it is so much the fashion in courts to practise towards women, such as magicians and prophets, I have had frequent relations with the Princess Amelia of Prussia, with the interesting and unfortunate Princess of Culmbach, and lastly, with the young Margravine of Bareith, the sister of Frederick. We endeavour to gain these women through the heart rather than the mind. I have laboured nobly, I am bold to say, to attach them to us, and I have succeeded. But this phase of my life is not that upon which I would speak to you. In your future enterprises you will find

traces of me, and you will continue what I have commenced. I would speak to you now of Albert, and would acquaint you with all that part of his existence of which you are ignorant. We have still time. Lend me your attention for a while. You will learn how, in the terrible and singular life I have led, I at last knew tender emotions and maternal joys.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"MINUTELY informed, through the cares of Marcus, of all that took place at the Château des Géants, I no sooner learnt their determination to send Albert to travel, and ascertained the direction he was to take, than I hastened to place myself on his route. This was at the period of those journeys of which I just now spoke to you, and in many of which Marcus accompanied me. The tutor and servants appointed to accompany Albert had never seen me; I did not, therefore, fear to meet their eyes. I was so impatient to see my son, that I had great difficulty in remaining a few hours behind him, and thus reaching Venice, where he was to make his first stay. But I was resolved only to show myself to him under cover of a species of solemn mystery; for it was not the ardent instinct of a mother alone which drove me to his arms, I had a still more serious design, a still more maternal duty to fulfil; I wished to save Albert from the narrow superstitions with which they had tried to surround him. To effect this, I had to gain possession of his imagination, of his confidence, of his mind, of his whole soul. I believed him a fervent Catholic, and at that time he was so to all outward appearance. He regularly followed all the external practices of the Roman faith. The persons who informed Marcus of these details, were ignorant of the heart of Albert, with which his father and his aunt were scarcely better acquainted. They found nothing with which to reproach him but a rigid asceticism, a too ardent and too literal manner of interpreting the Gospel. They did not understand that, in his rigid logic and upright candour, my noble child, firm in the practice of true Christianity, was already an impassioned

and incorrigible heretic. I was somewhat alarmed at the Jesuit tutor to whose care they had confided him; I feared lest I should be unable to approach him without being observed and opposed by a fanatical Argus. But I soon perceived that the unworthy Abbe —— did not even trouble himself about his health, and that Albert, neglected also by the servants, whom he disliked to command, lived almost alone and deserted in all the towns where he made any stay. I anxiously watched his every movement. Lodging in Venice, in the same hotel, I at last met him, alone and musing, on the staircases, in the galleries, on the quays. Oh! you can well imagine how my heart beat at the sight of him, how my soul yearned to embrace him, and what torrents of tears flowed from my dismayed yet enraptured eyes! He appeared so good, so noble, and yet so sad! Alas! for this sole object given to my love on earth! I followed him cautiously. Night approached. He entered the church of SS. John and Paul; a gloomy pile filled with tombs, with which doubtless you are well acquainted. Albert kneeled down in a corner; I glided in after him, and concealed myself behind a tomb. The church was deserted; the darkness was each moment becoming deeper. Albert was motionless as a statue. Still he appeared to be plunged into reverie rather than prayer. The lamp of the sanctuary threw a feeble light upon his features. He was so pale that I grew terrified! His fixed eye, his half open lips, the expression of despair in his attitude and physiognomy, almost broke my heart; I trembled like the flickering flame of the lamp. It seemed to me that, should I reveal myself to him at that moment, he would fall lifeless. I remembered all that Marcus had told me of his nervous susceptibility, and the danger of sudden emotions upon so excitable a frame. I withdrew, lest I might yield to my love, and waited for him beneath the portico. I had thrown over my dress, which was in itself dark and simple, a brown mantle, the hood of which concealed my face, and gave me the appearance of a countrywoman of the neighbourhood. As he came out I involuntarily took a step towards him; he stopped, and thinking me a beggar, took from his pocket a gold piece, and presented me with it. Oh! with what pride and gratitude did I receive those alms. Here it is, Consuelo; it is a sequin of Venice. I had it pierced for a

chain, and I always wear it in my bosom as a precious jewel, as a relic. This pledge, which the hand of my child has sanctified, has never quitted me from that day. I was no longer mistress of my transport; I seized that dear hand and carried it to my lips. He withdrew it with a sort of terror; it was moist with my tears.

"'What are you doing, woman?" he asked, in a voice whose pure and sonorous tones penetrated to the very marrow of my bones. 'Why do you bless me thus for so poor a gift? Without doubt, you are very unfortunate, and I have given you too little. How much do you want to relieve you from suffering? Speak: I long to console you; I hope I can do so.' And without even looking at it, he hastily held towards me all the gold he had about him.

"'You have given me enough, good young man,' I replied; 'I am satisfied.'

"'Then why do you weep?' he said to me, struck with the sobs which stifled my voice; 'have you some sorrow which my wealth cannot reach?'

"'No,' I replied; 'I weep with tenderness and joy.'

"'With joy! are these then tears of joy? and such tears for a piece of gold! Oh, human misery! Woman, take all the rest, I beseech you; but do not weep for joy. Think of your brethren the poor, so numerous, so degraded, so miserable, and remember that I cannot relieve you all!'

"He withdrew, sighing. I dared not follow him for fear of betraying myself. He had left his gold scattered on the pavement while holding it out to me, as if in haste to get rid of it. I picked it up and put it in the poor-box, that the charity of my noble son might be appeased. On the morrow I watched him again, and saw him enter the church of St. Mark's; I had resolved to be stronger and calmer, and I was so. We were once more alone in the twilight of the church. He remained for some time again plunged in thought, when suddenly I heard him murmur in a hollow voice, as he rose—

"'Oh, Christ! they crucify thee every day of their lives!'

"'Yes,' I replied, half reading his thoughts; 'the Pharisees and the doctors of the law.'

"He trembled, remained silent for a moment, and then said in a low voice, but without turning, and without seeking

to discover who it was that thus spoke: 'Again my mother's voice!'

"Consuelo, I almost fainted on hearing Albert thus invoke my memory, and finding that he preserved this instinct of filial affection. Still the fear of disturbing his reason, already so strongly excited, withheld me. Again I waited for him beneath the porch, and when he passed, satisfied with seeing him, did not approach him. But he perceived me, and shrunk back with a movement of terror. 'Signora,' he said to me, after a moment's hesitation; 'why are you begging to-day? Is it indeed a profession, then, as the pitiless rich say? Have you no family? Could you not be useful to some one, instead of wandering about at night, like a ghost, around the churches? What I gave you yesterday, was it not enough for to-day? Would you monopolise what might fall to the share of your brethren?'

"'I am not begging,' I replied. 'I put your gold into the box for the poor, except one sequin, which I desire to keep for love of thee.'

"'Who are you, then?' he cried, seizing my arm; 'your voice moves me to the depths of my soul. It seems to me that I know you. Show me your face! But no; I will not see you; you terrify me.'

"'Oh, Albert!' I said, carried beyond myself, and forgetting all my prudence; 'you too are afraid of me?'

"He trembled from head to foot, and answered again with an expression of terror and religious respect: 'Yes, it is her voice, the voice of my mother!'

"'I know not who may be your mother,' I replied, terrified at my imprudence. 'I only know your name, since the poor are already familiar with it. How is it that I terrify you? Is your mother dead?'

"'They say that she is dead,' he replied; 'but my mother is not dead to me.'

"'Where does she live, then?'

"'In my heart, in my thoughts, continually, eternally. I have dreamed of her voice, I have dreamed of her features, a hundred, a thousand times!'

"I was frightened as well as charmed by the burst of affection which thus drew him towards me. But perceiving that he evinced signs of bewilderment, I conquered my tenderness that I might calm him.

"'Albert,' I said to him, 'I knew your mother; I was her friend. She charged me to speak to you of her some day, when you should be old enough to understand what I had to say. I am not what I appear. I only followed you yesterday and to-day, that I might have an opportunity of conversing with you. Listen to me calmly then, and do not allow yourself to be disturbed by foolish superstitions. Will you follow me beneath the arcades of the Procurators, which are now deserted, and there converse with me? Do you feel sufficiently tranquil, sufficiently collected for this?

"'You, the friend of my mother!' he cried, 'you charged by her to speak to me of her! Oh, yes! speak, speak! You see I was not deceived. You see that an inward voice warned me. I felt that there was something of her in you. No, I am not superstitious, I am not mad; only my heart is more alive and more accessible than many others to certain things which they do not understand and do not feel. You can understand this, if you understood my mother. Speak to me of her then; speak to me again with her voice, with her spirit.'

"Having thus succeeded, though imperfectly, in diverting his thoughts into a different channel to his emotion, I led him beneath the arcades, and commenced by questioning him about his childhood, about his recollections, about the principles which had been instilled into him, about the idea he had formed of the principles and ideas of his mother.

"The questions I asked, clearly proved to him that I was acquainted with the secrets of his family, and capable of understanding those of his own heart. Oh! my daughter, what an enthusiastic pride took possession of me when I saw the ardent love which Albert cherished for me, the faith he had in my piety and virtue, the horror with which he was inspired by the superstitious detestation in which my memory was held by the catholics of Riesenburg; the purity of his soul, the grandeur of his religious and patriotic feelings, in short, all those sublime instincts which a catholic education had been unable to stifle in him. But at the same time, what profound grief filled my heart at the precocious and incurable sadness which preyed on this young soul, and the combats which had already crushed it, as they had tried to crush mine! Albert still believed himself a catholic. He dared not openly revolt against the decrees of the Church.

He had need of faith in a constituted religion. Already more enlightened and meditative than was natural to his age (he was scarcely twenty), he had reflected deeply upon the long and gloomy history of heresies, and he could not resolve to condemn certain of our doctrines. Compelled, however, to believe in the errors of innovators, so exaggerated and so envenomed by ecclesiastical historians, he floated on a sea of uncertainties; now condemning revolt, now cursing tyranny; unable to arrive at any conclusion, except that good men had become bewildered in their attempts at reform, and that men of blood had sullied the sanctuary while wishing to defend it.

"It was necessary therefore to enlighten his mind; to lay open the faults and excesses of both parties; to teach him to embrace courageously the defence of the innovators while deploring their inevitable excesses; to exhort him to abandon the side of cunning, violence, and oppression, while recognising the excellence of a certain mission in the more distant past. I found no difficulty in enlightening him. He already foresaw, already divined, already concluded, before I could furnish the proof. His admirable instinct responded to my inspirations; but, when he finally comprehended me, a more overwhelming grief than that of uncertainty took possession of his bewildered soul. Truth, then, was nowhere recognised upon earth! The law of God no longer lived in any sanctuary! No people, no sect, no school, practised the Christian virtue, or sought to illustrate and develop it. Catholics and Protestants alike had abandoned the divine path; everywhere reigned the law of the strongest; everywhere the weak were enslaved and degraded; Christ was crucified daily upon every altar erected to him by man! The night passed away in this bitter and absorbing conversation.

"The clock slowly struck the passing hours unheeded by Albert. I became alarmed at this power of intellectual abstraction which revealed to me his taste for struggle and difficulty, his power over grief. I admired the manly pride, the sorrowful expression of my noble and unfortunate child; I recognised myself in him; I read as it were my past life, and again experienced with him the long tortures of my heart and brain, and while I contemplated upon his broad brow, illuminated by the moonlight, the useless physical and moral beauty of my own solitary and uncomprehended

youth, I wept over him and myself at the same time. His lamentations were long and heart-rending. I dared not yet confide to him the secrets of our association; I feared lest he should not understand them at once, and that in his grief he might reject them as useless and dangerous. Uneasy at his long watching and continued pacing to and fro, I promised to open a door of safety to him if he would consent to wait and to prepare himself; I gently excited his imagination with the expectation of a new revelation, and I led him back to the hotel where we both lived, promising him a fresh interview, which I postponed for several days, that I might not agitate him too strongly.

"It was only when about to leave me that he thought of asking me who I was. 'I cannot tell you,' I replied; 'I bear a feigned name; I have reasons for concealing myself. Do not speak of me to any one.'

"He never asked me any further questions, and appeared contented with my reply; but his delicate reserve was accompanied by another feeling, as strange as his character, as gloomy as his mental habits. He told me long after, that from that time he had always taken me for the soul of his mother, appearing to him under a real form, and with circumstances explicable to the vulgar, but in fact supernatural.

"Thus my dear Albert persisted in recognising me in spite of myself. He preferred inventing a fantastic world rather than doubt my presence; and I could not succeed in deceiving the penetrating instinct of his heart. All my efforts to allay his excitement served only to wrap him in a sort of calm and reserved delirium, in which he had neither an opponent nor confidant, not even in myself, who was its object. He submitted religiously to the will of the spectre who forbade him to recognise and name it; but he persisted in believing himself under the influence of a spirit.

"The terrible tranquillity which henceforth characterised the wanderings of Albert's imagination; the sombre and stoical courage which ever urged him to confront unarmed the phantoms engendered by his brain, led me for some time into a fatal error. I knew not the singular idea he had formed respecting my re-appearance upon earth. I believed that he looked on me as the mysterious friend of his deceased mother and the guardian of his own youth. I was surprised,

it is true, at the little amount of curiosity he evinced, and the calmness with which he received my assiduous cares; but this blind respect, this delicate submission, this absence of anxiety about all the realities of life, appeared so much in keeping with his character, reserved, dreary, and contemplative as it was, that I did not sufficiently seek for the secret cause. Labouring then to fortify his reason against the excess of his enthusiasm, I assisted, without knowing it, to develop in his mind that species of insanity, at once sublime and deplorable, of which he was so long the victim.

"By degrees, in a series of interviews, always without either confidants or witnesses, I unfolded to him the doctrine of which our order has made itself the depositary and the secret propagator. I initiated him into our project of universal regeneration. At Rome, in the subterranean caves set apart for our mysteries, Marcus presented him to the brethren, and procured his admittance to the first grades of freemasonry, but reserved to himself the revelation of the symbols concealed beneath these vague and eccentric forms, the numerous interpretations of which accord so well with the degree of intelligence and courage in the adept. For seven years I followed my son in all his travels; always quitting a place one day after him, and arriving the morning subsequent to his arrival.

"I took care always to lodge at a considerable distance from him, and never to show myself either to his tutor or his servants, whom, in obedience to my advice, he took the precaution of frequently changing, and of even keeping at a distance from his person. I sometimes asked him if he were not surprised at finding me everywhere with him.

"'Oh, no,' he replied, 'I am well aware that you will follow me everywhere.'

"And when I wished him to explain the reason of this confidence—

"'My mother has charged you to give me life,' he replied, 'and you know that if you were to abandon me now I should die.'

"He always spoke in an enthusiastic and, as it were, inspired manner. I was accustomed to see him in the mood, and unconsciously, while in communication with him, became so myself. Marcus frequently reproached me, and I often reproached myself, for having thus nourished the inward

flame which devoured Albert. Marcus would have enlightened him by more material teaching, and by a colder logic; but at other moments I was consoled by thinking that had it not been for the mental food with which I furnished him, this flame would have consumed him yet more quickly and cruelly. My other children had shown the same tendency to enthusiasm, and their souls had been crushed, for it was the constant endeavour of those about them to stifle this tendency, as if it were a flame whose light they dreaded. They sank before acquiring strength to resist. But for my teachings, which unceasingly rekindled the sacred spark in a free and pure air, the soul of Albert might have rejoined those of his brothers, as, without the teachings of Marcus, I should have died before I had lived. Moreover, I frequently endeavoured to divert his mind from this eternal aspiration towards ideal things, by encouraging him to study science and history. He obeyed me gently and conscientiously. He studied the natural sciences, and the languages of the different countries through which he passed; he read enormously; he even cultivated the arts, and studied music without a master. All this was but pastime and repose to his ardent and powerful intellect. A stranger to all the seductions of his age, an uncompromising enemy of the world and its vanities, he lived everywhere in profound retirement, and obstinately resisting the advice of his tutor, would enter no saloon, be presented at no court. It was with difficulty that he could be persuaded to visit a few of his father's oldest friends. He observed a grave and reserved demeanour before them which afforded no ground for criticism; and he only abandoned himself to confidence and intimacy with a few adepts of our order, to whom Marcus particularly recommended him. For the rest, he begged us not to exact from him a promise that he should occupy himself with propagandism before he felt the gift of persuasion kindled within him; and he often frankly declared to me that he did not possess it, because he had not as yet faith in the excellence of our means. He allowed himself to be conducted from grade to grade like a docile pupil; but examining all with severe logic and scrupulous good faith, he ever reserved to himself, as he said, the right of proposing reforms and amelioration when he should feel himself sufficiently enlightened to dare to trust his own judgment. Until then he wished to remain humble, patient,

and submissive to the forms established in our secret society. Plunged in study and meditation, he held his tutor in awe by the gravity of his character and the coldness of his bearing. The *abbé* thus came in time to look on him as a gloomy pedant, and withdrew himself from his society as much as possible, in order that he might devote himself solely to the intrigues of his order. Albert even resided a long time in France and England without him; he was frequently a hundred leagues distant from him, and only rejoined him when he wished to visit another country. Often, indeed, they did not travel together. At such periods I enjoyed the greatest freedom in seeing my child, and his exclusive tenderness repayed me a thousand times for the cares I bestowed upon him. My health, too, had become stronger. Thus, as sometimes happens with delicate constitutions, whose sufferings become a habit to which they cease to be sensible, I scarcely perceived mine. The fatigue, the night watches, the long conversations, the painful journeys, instead of weakening me, sustained me in a sort of slow and continued fever, which had become, and which remains, my usual state of health. Fragile and trembling as you see me, there are no labours and fatigues which I could not endure better than you, beautiful flower of the spring! Excitement has become my element; and I take my repose while in action, like those professional couriers who have learned to sleep while their horses are at full speed.

"This experience of what an energetic soul united to a weak body may endure and accomplish, gave me confidence in Albert's strength. I become accustomed to see him at times languid and weak like myself, at others again, animated and feverish. We have often suffered together from the same physical cause, resulting from the same mental emotions; and never, perhaps, was our intimacy more sweet and tender than in those hours of trial, when the same fever burned in our veins, and the same prostration drew forth our feeble sighs. How often did it seem to us that we were the same being! how often have we broken the silence into which the same reveries had plunged us, by addressing each other in the same words! How many times, in short, agitated and oppressed by different feelings, have we not each communicated, by a pressure of the hand, the languor or animation of the other! What good and evil have we not experienced in

common! Oh, my son! oh, my only passion! Oh! flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone! What tempests have we not braved, covered with the same celestial shield! What storms have we not resisted, pressing close to one another, and pronouncing the same watchword of salvation: Love, truth, justice!

"We were in Poland, on the frontiers of Turkey, and Albert, having gone through the successive initiations of freemasonry, and the superior grades which form the last link between this preparatory society and our own, was about to direct his steps towards that part of Germany in which we were residing, prior to his admission to the sacred banquet of the Invisibles, when the Count Christian de Rudolstadt recalled him home. This was a thunderblow to me. As for my son, in spite of the care I had taken to prevent his forgetting his family, he no longer loved them except as a tender memory of the past; he no longer recollected an existence with them. It never occurred to us, however, to resist this order, which was worded with the cold dignity and confidence of paternal authority, as it is understood in the Catholic and patrician families of our country. Albert prepared to leave me, without knowing how long we were to be separated, but unwilling to believe that it would be long before he again saw me, and renewed with Marcus the ties of the association which claimed him. Albert had but little idea of time, and still less appreciation of the every-day events of life.

"'Are we parting!' he said to me, as he saw me weeping in spite of myself. 'Every time I have called you from the depths of my heart, you have appeared to me. I shall still call you.'

"'Albert, Albert,' I replied, 'this time where you go I cannot follow.'

"He turned pale, and pressed close to me like a frightened child. The moment had now arrived for me to reveal my secret.

"'I am not the soul of your mother,' I said to him, after a short preface; 'I am your mother herself.'

"'Why do you tell me this?' he replied, with a strange smile; 'do I not know it? Do we not resemble each other? Have I not seen your portrait at Riesenburg? Besides, do you think that I have forgotten you? Have I not alway seen you, always known you?'

"'And you were not surprised to see me alive; I, who was believed to be buried in the chapel in the Castle of the Giants?'

"'No,' he replied, 'I was not surprised; I was too happy for that. God has the power to work miracles, and it is not for men to wonder.'

"This strange child had more difficulty in understanding the terrible realities of my history than the prodigy in the belief of which he had nursed himself. He had believed in my resurrection as in that of Christ; he had taken literally my doctrine of the transmission of life; he believed in it to excess; that is to say, he was not astonished to see me retain my individuality after having forsaken my body to clothe myself in another. I do not even know if I succeeded in convincing him that my life had not been interrupted by my swoon, and that my mortal frame had not remained in the tomb. He listened to me with an absent yet excited expression, as if he heard other words issuing from my mouth than those I pronounced. Something inexplicable was at this moment taking place within him. A terrible link yet held Albert's soul on the brink of the abyss. Real life could not take possession of him, until he had endured this last crisis from which I had miraculously issued, this apparent death, the last effort of the idea of eternity struggling with the idea of time. My heart felt as if it would break as I parted from him; a gloomy presentiment warned me vaguely that he was about to enter this climacteric which had so violently shaken my own existence, and that the hour was not far distant when Albert would be annihilated or regenerated. I had observed in him a tendency to a cataleptic state. He had in my presence been attacked with fits of sleep, so long, so profound, so terrifying, his respiration at those times was so feeble, his pulse so indistinct, that I constantly wrote to Marcus: 'Never allow Albert to be buried, or do not fear to break open his tomb.' Unhappily for us, Marcus could no longer present himself at the Castle of the Giants; he was forbidden to enter the States of the Empire. He had been seriously compromised in an insurrection at Prague, in which indeed his influence had been more than suspected, and had only escaped by flight from the rigour of the Austrian laws. Devoured with anxiety, I returned here. Albert had promised to write to me every day. I had promised, on my part, as soon as a

day should pass without bringing me a letter, that I would depart for Bohemia, and present myself at Riesenburg, at all risks.

"The grief of our separation was at first less severely felt by him than me. He did not understand what was occurring; he did not seem to believe in it. But when he returned beneath that fatal roof, the air of which seemed to carry with it a poison to the ardent spirits of the descendants of Ziska, his whole being received a terrible shock; he ran and shut himself up in the chamber I had inhabited; he called upon me, and finding I did not appear, he felt persuaded that I had died a second time, and that I should never more be restored to him in the course of his present existence. At least, it is thus he has since explained to me what took place in his soul at that fatal hour, in which his reason and his faith were for whole years overthrown. He looked at my portrait for a long time; but on comparing this representation of my past youth and beauty with the impression of me which was so indelibly impressed on his memory, he started back from the portrait with terror, and again appeared before his family gloomy, taciturn, and dispirited. He went to visit my tomb; he was seized with a vertigo and panic. The idea of death appeared to him monstrous! and yet, to console him, his father told him that I was there, that he must kneel and pray for the repose of my soul.

"'The repose!' cried Albert, beside himself; 'the repose of the soul! No, the soul of my mother is not made for such annihilation, any more than my own. Neither my mother nor I will repose in a tomb. Never, never! This catholic cavern, these sealed sepulchres, this abandonment of life, this divorce between heaven and earth, between the body and the soul, fills me with horror.'

"It was by such discourses that Albert began to spread terror in the simple and timid soul of his father. His words were repeated to the chaplain, that he might endeavour to explain them. This bigoted man saw in them but a cry extracted from him by the consciousness of my eternal damnation. The superstitious fear which took possession of the minds of those about Albert, the efforts of his family to lead him back to Catholic submission, suddenly succeeded in torturing him, and his excitement quickly took the diseased form which you witnessed. His ideas became confused; by

seeing and touching the proofs of my death, he forgot that he had known me living, and I no longer seemed to him but as a fugitive spectre, ever ready to abandon him. His fancy evoked this spectre, which gave him in return nothing but incoherent discourses, sorrowful cries, and sinister threats. When calm returned, his reason remained veiled, as it were, beneath a cloud. He had lost the memory of recent things; he persuaded himself that he had gone through a dream of eight years with me; or rather, these eight years of happiness, activity, and strength, appeared to him like the dream of an hour.

"Receiving no letter from him, I was about to hasten to him. Marcus prevented me. 'The post,' said he, 'intercepts our letters, or the family of Rudolstadt suppresses them.' He continued to receive, through his faithful correspondent, intelligence from Riesenburg; my son was looked upon as calm, well, and happy in his family. You know what care was taken to conceal his situation, and how well they succeeded at first.

'In his travels, Albert had known the young Trenck, and had become attached to him in a warm friendship. Trenck, beloved by the Princess of Prussia, and persecuted by King Frederick, wrote to my son of his joys and misfortunes; he ardently urged him to come to him at Dresden, to give him advice and assistance. Albert undertook this journey; and scarcely had he quitted the gloomy château of Riesenburg, than zeal, memory, and reason returned to him. Trenck had met my son in the militia of the neophytes of the Invisibles. There they had understood each other, and had sworn a chivalric fraternity. Informed by Marcus of their projected interview, I hastened to Dresden; I saw Albert; I followed him into Prussia, where he introduced himself into the palace of the king under a disguise, that he might serve Trenck's love, and fulfil a message of the Invisibles. Marcus thought that this activity, and the consciousness of fulfilling a useful and generous part, might save Albert from his dangerous melancholy. He was right. Albert returned to life among us. Marcus desired on his return to lead him here, and to keep him for some time in the society of the most venerable chiefs of the order; he was convinced that, while breathing this true vital atmosphere of his superior soul, Albert would recover the lucidity of his genius. But

an unfortunate circumstance suddenly disturbed the confidence of my son. He had met upon his road the impostor Cagliostro, initiated, by the imprudence of the Rosicrucians, to some of their mysteries. Albert, who for some time had been received as a Rosicrucian, had passed this grade, and presided over one of their assemblies as grand-master. Thus he saw close what he had as yet only guessed at. He handled all those divers elements which compose the masonic affiliation; he recognised the error, the infatuation, the vanity, the imposture, even the fraud, which then began to creep into those sanctuaries, already invaded by the madness and vice of the age. Cagliostro, with his vigilant police of small secrets of the world, which he presented as the revelations of a familiar spirit; with his insidious eloquence, which parodied the great revolutionary inspirations; with his illusory art, which invoked pretended shadows; Cagliostro, an avaricious intriguer, caused a feeling of horror in the noble adept. The credulity of men of the world, the narrow superstition of a great number of freemasons, the shameful avidity which the promises of the philosopher's stone excited, and many other follies of the time in which we live, carried a fatal light into his soul. In his life of retirement and study he had not sufficiently understood the human race; he was not at all prepared to struggle against so many bad instincts. He could not endure so many follies. He desired that they should unmask, and shamefully expel all charlatans and sorcerers from the thresholds of our temples. He could not understand that it was necessary to support the degrading presence of Cagliostro because it was too late to get rid of him: because this man, if irritated, might be the loss of many estimable men; while, flattered by their protection and by an appearance of confidence, he might render many services to the cause without truly understanding it. Albert was indignant, and pronounced upon our work the anathema of a firm and ardent soul; he predicted that we should be ruined for having allowed the alloy to penetrate into the golden chain. He quitted us, saying that he was going to reflect upon what we tried to make him understand as to the terrible necessity of the work of conspiracy, and that he would return to ask us for the baptism when his poignant doubts should be dissipated. We knew not, alas! what gloomy reflections were his in the

solitude of Riesenburg. He told us nothing of them; perhaps even he did not recall them when their bitterness was once dissipated.

"He lived another year amidst alternations of calm and transport, of exuberant strength and fearful prostration. He wrote to us sometimes, without telling us of his sufferings and the decay of his health. He combated bitterly our political steps. He desired that henceforth we should cease to labour in secret, and to deceive men to induce them to drink the cup of degeneration. 'Throw aside your black masks,' he said; 'come out of your caverns. Efface from the pediment of your temple the word mystery, which does not befit the men of the future. No, I cannot labour with you; it is searching for life in the midst of corpses. Appear at once in the light of day. Do not lose precious time in organising your army; rely a little more upon its enthusiasm, and upon the sympathy of the people, and upon the spontaneity of generous instincts. An army, moreover, grows corrupt in repose; and the cunning it employs while lying in ambush takes from it the power and vitality necessary for combat.' Albert was right in principle; but the moment had not arrived when he would have been right in practice. This moment is yet perhaps far distant.

"At last you came to Riesenburg; you surprised him in the midst of the greatest distresses of his soul. You know, or rather you do not know, what influence you had upon him, even to the making him forgetful of all that was not you, to the giving him a new life, to the giving him death.

"When he believed that all was over between you and him, his whole strength abandoned him, he allowed himself to perish. Until then I was ignorant of the true nature and the degree of intensity of his suffering. The correspondent of Marcus told him that the Château des Géants was more and more closed from vulgar eyes; that Albert no longer quitted it; that he passed for a monomaniac with people of the world, but that the poor loved him and blessed him continually; and that some few persons of superior sense who had seen him, though struck with the eccentricity of his manners, had rendered, upon quitting him, homage to his eloquence, to his high wisdom, to the grandeur of his con-

ceptions. But at last I learned that Supperville had been called in, and I flew to Riesenburg in spite of Marcus, who, seeing me determined to run all risks, exposed himself to the same dangers that he might follow me.

"We arrived beneath the walls of the château disguised as beggars. No one recognised us. It was twenty-seven years since they had seen me, and it was ten since they had seen Marcus. They gave us alms and dismissed us. But we met with a friend, an unlooked-for saviour, in the person of the poor Zdenko. He treated us as brothers, and took us into affection, because he understood how interested we were in Albert; we knew how to speak to him in language which pleased his enthusiasm, and which made him reveal all the mortal sorrows of his friend. Zdenko was no longer the furious creature by whom your life had been menaced. Dejected and depressed, he came, like us, to ask humbly at the door of the château for tidings of Albert, and like us he was repulsed with vague answers, terrible to our anguish. Through a strange coincidence with the visions of Albert, Zdenko pretended that he had known me. I had appeared to him in his dreams, in his ecstasies; and without rendering account to himself, he surrended his will to me with an artless abondonment. 'Woman,' he would often say to me, 'I know not your name, but you are the good angel of my Podiebrad. I have often seen him sketch your face upon paper, and describe your voice, your look, and your step, in his happy hours, when heaven opened before him, and he saw around his couch those who are no more, according to the language of men.' Far from repulsing the confidences of Zdenko, I encouraged them. I flattered his illusion, and I obtained the admittance of Marcus and myself into the grotto of Schreckenstein. As I saw this subterranean abode, and learned that my son had lived there for weeks and almost months together, hidden from all the world, I understood the gloomy colouring of his thoughts. I saw a tomb there, to which Zdenko seemed to render a species of worship; and it was not without difficulty that I learned its destination. It was the great secret of Albert and Zdenko, and respecting which they were most reserved. 'Alas! it is there,' said the maniac to me, 'that we have buried Wanda de Prachalitz, the mother of my Albert; she would not rest in the chapel, where they had sealed her up in stone; her bones were

agitated and restless; and these,' he added, showing us the ossuary of the Taborites, on the banks of the rivulet, 'continually reproached us for not bringing them here. We went to search this sacred tomb, and we brought it here, and every day we cover it with flowers and kisses.' Terrified at this circumstance, which might in the end lead to the discovery of my secret, Marcus questioned Zdenko, and learned that he had brought my coffin there without opening it. Thus, Albert had been so ill, so distracted, as to forget my existence, and to persist in the idea of my death. But might not all this be a dream of Zdenko? I could not believe my ears. 'Oh! my friend!' I said to Marcus, with despair, 'if the torch of reason is extinguished to this point, and for ever, may God in his mercy take him!'

"Master at last of all the secrets of Zdenko, we learned that we could introduce ourselves by means of subterranean galleries and secret passages into the Château des Géants. We followed Zdenko one night, and waited at the entrance of the cistern, while he glided into the interior of the house. He returned laughing and singing; told us that Albert was cured; that he slept; and that they had put new clothes upon him, and a crown upon his head. I fell as if thunderstruck; I understood that Albert was dead. I know not what passed afterwards; I woke several times in the midst of a fever. I was lying on bears' skins and dried leaves, in the subterranean chamber which Albert had inhabited beneath Schreckenstein; Zdenko and Marcus watched over me by turns. The one told me, with an air of joy, that his Podiebrad was cured, that he would soon come to see me; the other, pale and pensive, said, 'All, perhaps, is not lost; let us not lose the hope of the miracle which saved you from the tomb.' I could understand no more; I was delirious; I desired to get up, to run, to cry. I had not the power to move; and the afflicted Marcus, seeing me in this state, had neither the strength nor the leisure to occupy himself with it seriously. His whole mind, his whole thoughts, were absorbed by another terrible anxiety. At last, one night, I think it was the third of my crisis, I suddenly became calm, and felt my strength returning. I tried to recollect my ideas; I succeeded in rising; I was alone in this horrible cave, which a sepulchural lamp scarcely lighted! I tried to quit it; I was locked in! Where were Marcus, Zdenko. and above all,

Albert? Memory returned to me; I uttered a cry, to which the icy vaults returned an echo so gloomy that the sweat poured from my brow, cold as the damp of the sepulchre; I thought myself once more buried alive. What had occurred? what was still occurring? I fell on my knees; I stretched out my arms in a prayer of desperation; I called Albert with furious cries. At last I heard heavy and unequal steps, as of people approaching with a heavy burden. A dog barked and panted, and quicker than they, scratched several times against the door. It opened, and I saw Marcus and Zdenko carrying Albert, stiff, livid, in short, to all appearance dead. His dog Cynabre jumped after him, and licked his hands as they hung down. Zdenko sang, improvising in a gentle and penetrating voice: 'Come, sleep in the bosom of thy mother, my poor friend, so long deprived of repose; come, sleep until day: we will awake thee in time for the rising of the sun.'

"I threw myself upon my son. 'He is not dead!' I cried. 'Oh, Marcus, you have saved him, have you not? He is not dead? he will awake?'

"'Madame, do not flatter yourself,' said Marcus, with a frightful firmness. 'I know nothing, I can believe in nothing; whatever may happen, keep up your courage. Assist me, and forget yourself.'

"I need not tell you what cares we bestowed upon the reanimation of Albert. Thank Heaven! there was a stove in this cave. We succeeded in warming his limbs.

"'See!' said I to Marcus, 'his hands are warm!'

"'We can impart heat to marble,' he replied, in a gloomy tone; 'but that does not give it life. His heart is as inert as stone.'

"Many dreadful hours passed in this attempt, in this terror, in this discouragement. Marcus, kneeling with his ear pressed against the breast of my son, and a mournful face, watched in vain for a feeble indication of life. Fainting, exhausted, I dared no longer to utter a word, or ask a question. I consulted the terrible brow of Marcus. A moment came when I dared not even look at him, for I thought I read there the final sentence.

"Zdenko, seated in a corner, played with Cynabre like a child, and continued singing; he broke off sometimes to tell us that we were tormenting Albert, that we must let him

sleep; that he, Zdenko, had seen him thus for weeks together, and that he would awake of himself. Marcus suffered cruelly in the confidence of this madman; he could not participate in it; but I would insist upon believing it, and I was indeed inspired.

"The madman had a celestial divination, an angelic certainty of the truth. At last I thought I caught an imperceptible movement upon the brow of Marcus; it seemed to me that his contracted eyebrows relaxed. I saw his hand tremble, then grow firm again in a fresh effort of courage; then he sighed profoundly, withdrew his ear from the place where the heart of my son had perhaps beaten; tried to speak, restrained himself, frightened at the perhaps chimerical joy he was about to give me; leaned forward again, listened anew, trembled; and suddenly rising and throwing himself back, staggered and fell, as though ready to die. 'Is there no hope?' I cried, tearing my hair. 'Wanda,' replied Marcus, in a suppressed voice,' your son lives!' And overcome by the intensity of his solicitude and courage, my stoical and tender friend fell, like one lifeless, by the side of Zdenko."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE Countess Wanda, overcome by the emotion of such a remembrance, continued her recital after a few moments' silence.

"We passed several days in the cavern, during which time strength and health returned to my son with an astonishing rapidity. Marcus, surprised at finding in him no organic mischief, no material alteration in the functions of life, was nevertheless alarmed at his absolute silence, at his real or apparent indifference to our transports, and the singularity of his situation. Albert had lost all memory. Plunged in a gloomy meditation, he made in vain secret efforts to understand what was passing around him. As for me, who knew well that grief was the sole cause of his illness and the catastrophe which had followed, I was not so impatient as Marcus to see him recover the poignant remem-

brances of his love. Marcus himself confessed that this effacing of the past from his mind could alone explain the rapid restoration of his physical powers. His body strengthened at the expense of his mind, with the same rapidity as it had given way before the sorrow and gloom of his thoughts.

"'He lives, and he will assuredly continue to live,' said Marcus; 'but his reason, is that for ever obscured?'

"'Let us get him from this tomb as quickly as possible,' I replied; 'the air, the sun, and action, will doubtless remove this sleep of the soul.'

"'Let us, above all, save him from the false and impossible life which has killed him,' returned Marcus; 'let us separate him from his family, and from this world which opposes all his instincts; let us conduct him to those sympathetic souls in contact with whom his own will receive clearness and vigour.'

"Could I hesitate? While wandering, carefully, at the close of day, in the environs of Schreckenstein, where I feigned to ask alms from the few passers-by on the road, I had learned that the Count Christian had fallen into a species of childishness. He would not have understood the return of his son; and this spectacle of anticipated death in his father, if Albert, in his turn, could have understood it, would have completely overwhelmed him. Must he then be given and abandoned to the ignorant cares of his old aunt, of the illiterate chaplain, and his besotted uncle, who had made his life so miserable, and brought him to such a sad death? 'Ah, let us fly with him,' I said at last to Marcus, 'that he may not have before his eyes the agony of his father, and the terrible spectacle of catholic idolatry with which they surround the bed of the dying. My heart breaks at the thought that this husband, who never understood me, but whose pure and simple virtues I have ever venerated, and whom I have respected in my abandonment of him as religiously as during my union with him, is about to quit the earth without it being possible for us to exchange a mutual pardon. But since it must be so, since my apparition and that of my son can but be indifferent or fatal to him, let us depart; let us not restore to that tomb of Riesenburg him whom we have re-conquered from death, and to whom life once more, I trust, opens a sublime path. Ah! let us obey the first impulse which brought us here! Let us snatch

Albert from the captivity of the false duties created by rank and riches; these duties will ever be crimes in his eyes, and if he should persist in fulfilling them for the gratification of relations whom old age and death already dispute with him, he will himself die in the effort, he will be the first to die. I know what I suffered in this slavery of thought, in this mortal and incessant contradiction between the life of the soul and the positive life: between principle, and instincts, and forced habits. I see clearly he has passed by the same roads, that he has gathered the same poison. Let us then save him; and if, by-and-bye, he would retrace the step we are about to take, will he not be free to do so? If the life of his father should be prolonged, and if his own moral health will allow him, will there not always be time to return and console the last days of Christian by his presence and his love?"

"'It will be difficult,' replied Marcus. 'I foresee terrible obstacles in the future, if Albert should desire to escape his divorce from constituted society, from the world and his family. But why should Albert desire it? His family will, perhaps, be extinct, before he shall have recovered his memory; and I know well what he will think, on the day he again becomes himself, of the name, honour, and riches, to be conquered from the world. Heaven grant that day may arrive! Our most important and immediate duty is to place him under conditions where his cure may be possible.'

"As soon as Albert was sufficiently recovered, we issued one night from the grotto. At a short distance from Schreckenstein, we placed him upon a horse, and thus regained the frontier, which, as you know, is at this spot close at hand. and where we found quicker and easier means of transit. The connexion which our order entertained with the numerous lodges of the masonic order, secured to us throughout Germany the facility of travelling without being recognised, and without being submitted to the investigations of the police. Bohemia was for us the only perilous spot, on account of the recent outbreaks at Prague and the jealous surveillance of the Austrian power.

"'And what became of Zdenko?' asked the young Countess de Rudolstadt.

"Zdenko almost ruined us by his obstinacy in insisting upon preventing our departure, or at least that of Albert,

from whom he would not be separated, and whom he would not follow. He persisted in imagining that Albert could not live out of the fatal and gloomy habitation of Schreckenstein.

"It is only there,' said he, 'that my Podiebrad is tranquil; everywhere else men torment him. They prevent him from sleeping; they urge him to deny our fathers of Mount Tabor, and to lead a life of shame and perjury, which exasperates him. Leave him here with me; I will take good care of him as I have often done before. I will not disturb his meditations; when he wishes to remain quiet I will walk noiselessly, and I will hold the muzzle of Cenabre for hours together in my hands, that he may not startly him by licking him. When he wishes to be gay, I will sing him the songs he loves, I will compose him fresh ones which he will love still better, for he loves all my compositions, and he alone understands them. Leave me then my Podiebrad; I tell you I know better than you what is good for him; and when you wish to see him again, you will find him playing on the violin, or planting beautiful branches of cypress, which I will go and cut for him in the forest, to ornament the tomb of his beloved mother. I will nourish him well. I know all the cabins in which the people never refuse bread, milk, or fruits to the good old Zdenko; and for a long time past the poor peasants of Bœhmer Wald have been accustomed, though unknown to themselves, to nourish their noble master, the rich Podiebrad. Albert does not like the feasts in which they eat the flesh of animals; he prefers a life of innocence and simplicity. He does not want to see the sun: he prefers the rays of the moon through the woods; and when he desires society, I conduct him to the glades, to the wild places where encamp at night our good friends the Zingari, those children of the Lord, who know neither the laws nor riches.'

"I listened attentively to Zdenko, since his artless discourses revealed to me the life Albert had led with him in his frequent retreats to the Schreckenstein.

"'Do not fear,' he added, 'that I ever will reveal to his enemies the secret of his abode. They are such liars and fools that they say now, 'Our child is dead, our friend is dead, our master is dead.' They would not believe that he is living, even if they should see him. Moreover, was I not

accustomed to reply, when they asked me if I had seen the Count Albert, 'Doubtless he is dead!' And as I laughed while I said it, they pretended I was mad. But I spoke of death in mockery of them, because they believe, or pretend to believe, in death. And when the people of the château endeavoured to follow me, had I not a thousand tricks to mislead them? Oh! I know all the cunning of the hare and the partridge. I know, like them, how to conceal myself in a thicket, how to disappear beneath the heath, how to make a false track, to leap, to clear a torrent, to get into some hiding-place that my pursuers may pass me, and like the meteor of the night, to mislead them, and plunge them, to their great peril, into quagmires and marshes. They call Zdenko an innocent. The innocent is more mischievous than all of them put together. There never was but one maiden, a holy maiden, who could deceive the prudence of Zdenko. She knew magic words to charm his anger; she possessed talismans to overcome all snares and dangers. She was called Consuelo.'

"When Zdenko pronounced your name, Albert slightly trembled and turned away his head; but he immediately let it fall again on his breast, and his memory was not awakened. I tried in vain to make some compromise with this guardian, so faithful and so blind, by promising to bring Albert back to the Schreckenstein, upon condition that he would first follow him to some other place where Albert wished to go. I could not induce him; and when at last, half by persuasion, half by force, we had obliged him to allow my son to leave the cavern, he followed us weeping, murmuring, and singing in a lamentable voice, beyond the mines of Cuttemberg. Arrived in a celebrated spot where Ziska had formerly gained one of his great victories over Sigismund, Zdenko quickly recognised the rocks which mark the frontier, for no one has explored like him, in his vagabond journeys, all the paths of this country. Here he stopped, and said, striking the ground with his foot—'Never again will Zdenko leave the land which contains the bones of his fathers! It is not long since, exiled and banished by my Podiebrad, for having misunderstood and threatened the holy maiden whom he loved, I passed weeks and months in strange countries. I thought I should go mad. I returned a short time since to my dear forests, to see Albert sleep, because a voice had

sung to me in my slumber that his anger had passed. Now that he has ceased to curse me, you steal him from me. If it be to conduct him to his Consuelo, I consent. But as for quitting my country again, as for speaking the language of our enemies, as for extending my hand to them, and leaving Schreckenstein deserted and abandoned, I will never do it. That is beyond my strength; and moreover, the voice of my slumbers has forbidden me to do it. Zdenko must live and die upon the land of the Sclavonians; he must live and die singing the glory of the Sclavonians, and their misfortunes in the language of his parents. Adieu and depart! Had not Albert forbidden me to shed human blood, you should not thus deprive me of him; but he will again curse me if I raise my hand against you, and I would rather never again see him more than see him angry with me. Thou hearest me, O my Podiebrad!' cried he, pressing to his lips the hands of my son, who looked at him and listened to him without understanding what he said: 'I obey thee, and depart. When thou returnest, thou wilt find thy stove lighted, thy books arranged, thy bed of leaves renewed, and the tomb of thy mother decorated with evergreen palms. If it be in the season of flowers, there shall be flowers over her and the bones of our martyrs at the brink of the spring. Adieu, Cynabre!' And speaking thus, with a voice broken by tears, the poor Zdenko flew down the declivity of the rocks which incline toward Bohemia, and disappeared with the rapidity of a deer at the first dawn of day.

"I will not relate to you, dear Consuelo, the anxieties attendant upon our attempt during the first weeks Albert passed with us. Concealed in the pavilion you now inhabit, he returned by degrees to the moral life we were endeavouring to awaken in him, but not without care and precaution. The first words which fell from his lips, after two months of absolute silence, were provoked by a musical emotion. Mareus had understood that Albert's life was bound up in his love for you, and he had resolved not to invoke the remembrance of this love until he should have proved you worthy of inspiring it, and free one day to return it. He sought then the minutest information concerning you, and in a short time was acquainted with the most trifling details of your character, the smallest particulars of your life, past and present. Thanks to the wise organisation of our order, to the connection established

with all the other societies, to a number of neophytes and adepts, whose functions consist in examining with the most scrupulous attention the things and persons which interest us, there is nothing which can escape our investigations: there are no secrets from us in the world. We know how to penetrate into the arcana of politics, as into the intrigues of courts. Your spotless life, your guileless character, were not then very difficult to learn and be judged of. The Baron de Trenck, as soon as he knew that the man by whom you had been beloved, and whose name you had never mentioned to him, was no other than his friend Albert, spoke of you to us with enthusiasm. The Count de St. Germain, apparently the most absent of men, but in reality the most clear-sighted —that strange visionary, that superior spirit, who seems only to live in the past, and whom nothing in the present escapes —quickly furnished us with the most complete information concerning you, and of such a nature, that from that moment I attached myself to you with tenderness, and looked upon you as my own daughter.

"When we were sufficiently instructed to act with certainty, we brought skilful musicians beneath this very window where we are now seated. Albert sat where you are, leaning against this curtain, and contemplating the setting sun; Marcus held one of his hands, and I the other. In the middle of a symphony composed expressly for four instruments, in which we had caused to be introduced several Bohemian airs which Albert had played with so much soul and religion, there occurred the chant to the Virgin, with which you had formerly charmed him—

'O Consuelo de mi alma!'

At that moment, Albert, who had evinced but slight emotion at the songs of our ancient Bohemia, threw himself into my arms, and bursting into tears cried, 'Oh, my mother! oh, my mother!'

"Marcus caused the music to cease; he was content with the emotion produced; he would not abuse it the first time. Albert had spoken; he had recognised me; he had found, once more, the strength to love. Many days yet passed before his mind had entirely recovered its freedom. Nevertheless he had no access of delirium. When he appeared fatigued with exercise of his faculties, he fell into a mournful

silence; but insensibly his physiognomy took a less gloomy expression, and by degrees we gently combated this taciturn disposition. At length we had the happiness to see this necessity for intellectual repose disappear, and there was no further suspension in the labour of his thoughts than the hours of sleep: regular, peaceful, and almost like that of other men. Albert was restored to the consciousness of life; of his love for you and for me; of his charity and his enthusiasm for his fellow-beings and for virtue; of his faith, and of his desire to make it triumph. He continued to cherish the thought of you without bitterness, without distrust, or regret for all he had suffered for you. But spite of the care he took to re-assure us, and to show us his courage and abnegation, we soon saw that his passion had lost nothing of its intensity; he had only acquired more moral and physical force to endure it. We did not seek to combat it; far from it, we united our efforts, Marcus and I, to give him hope; and we resolved to inform you of the existence of this husband for whom you religiously mourned, not in your dress, but in your soul. But Albert, with a generous resignation, and a just sense of his situation towards you, prevented us from taking hasty steps. 'She did not love me,' he said to us; 'she took pity upon me in my agony; she could not have engaged without terror, nor, perhaps, without despair, to pass her life with me. She would return to me now from duty. What misery would it be to me to deprive her of her liberty, of the excitement of her art, and perhaps of the joys of a first love! It is enough to have been the object of her compassion; do not reduce me to be that of her painful devotion. Let her live; let her know the pleasures of independance, the intoxications of glory, and yet greater happiness if need be. It is not for myself that I love her; and if it be but too true that she is necessary to my happiness, I shall know how to renounce happiness, provided my sacrifice is for her good. Besides, am I born for happiness? Have I any right to it when all the world suffers and groans? Have I not other duties besides that of labouring for my own satisfaction? Shall I not find in the exercise of these duties the strength to forget myself, and to desire nothing more for myself? I will at least attempt it; if I fail, you will take pity upon me; you will labour to give me fresh courage; that will be better than racking me with false hopes, and unceasingly reminding

me that my heart is sick, and devoured with the egotistical desire of being happy. Save me, O my friends! bless me, O my mother! and do not speak to me of that which takes from me strength and virtue, when, spite of myself, I feel the sting of my torments! I know well that the greatest evil I endured at Riesenburg was that which I caused to others. I should go mad again—I should die, perhaps, blaspheming—were I to see Consuelo suffering the agonies I have not known how to spare to the other objects of my affection!'

"His health appeared completely re-established; and other succour than that of my tenderness assisted him in combating his unfortunate passion. Marcus, and a few chiefs of our order, initiated him with fervour into the mysteries of our enterprise. He found serious and melancholy joy in these vast projects, in these bold hopes, and above all, in those long philosophical conversations, where, if he did not always meet with an identity of opinions between him and his noble friends, he at least felt his soul in sympathy with theirs in all which concerned profound and ardent feeling, the love of good, the desire for justice and truth.

"But the cruel destiny of our race was not yet accomplished. Albert had yet to suffer; his heart was doomed to bleed eternally for the family, innocent of all his sorrows, but condemned by a singular fatality to destroy their own happiness while crushing his. We had not concealed from him, as soon as he was strong enough to bear the intelligence, the death of his father, which had happened a short time after his own: for I must needs make use of this strange expression to characterise an event so strange. Albert had mourned for his father with an enthusiastic tenderness: with the species of solemn joy with which the hope of a better and more enlarged life for this man, pure and worthy of recompense, inspired him. He was therefore much more afflicted at the bereaved state of his remaining relations, the Baron Frederick and the Canoness Wenceslawa, than at the departure of his father. He reproached himself for enjoying far from them consolations in which they did not share, and he resolved to rejoin them for some time, to make them acquainted with the secret of his cure, of his miraculous resurrection, and to establish their existence in the happiest manner possible. He was ignorant of the disappearance of his cousin Amelia, which had taken place during his illness at Riesenberg, and which

they had carefully concealed from him that he might be spared one sorrow the more. We had not thought it right to instruct him of this event; we had not been able to withdraw my unfortunate niece from a deplorable error; and when we were about to get possession of her seducer, the less indulgent pride of the Saxon Rudolstadts had been before us. They had caused Amelia to be secretly arrested upon the Prussian territories, where she had flattered herself with finding a refuge; they had delivered her up to the rigour of King Frederick, and this monarch had given them a gracious mark of protection, by causing a young and unfortunate girl to be shut up in the fortress of Spandau. She passed nearly a year in frightful captivity, holding communication with no one, and bound to think herself happy at seeing the secret of her dishonour strictly guarded by the generous protection of the monarch jailer."

"Oh! madame," interrupted Consuelo, with emotion; "is she then still at Spandau?"

"We have just procured her release. Albert and Liverani were not able to deliver her at the same time as yourself, because she was more strictly watched; her rebellion, her imprudent attempts at escape, her impatience, and her anger, had aggravated the rigours of her slavery. But we have other means than those to which you owe your safety. Our adepts are everywhere, and some among them cultivate the favour of courts that they may make use of it for the success of our designs. We obtained for Amelia the protection of the young Margravine of Bareith, sister to the King of Prussia, who demanded and obtained her release, by promising to take charge of her and to answer for her conduct in the future. In a few days the young baroness will be with the Princess Sophia Wilhelmina, whose heart is as good as her tongue is wicked, and who will accord her the same indulgence and generosity she showed towards the Princess Culmbach: another unfortunate, degraded in the eyes of the world like Amelia, and who, like her, has been a victim to the penitentiary *régime* of the royal fortresses.

"Albert was therefore ignorant of the misfortunes of his cousin, when he formed the resolution of going and seeing his uncle and aunt at the Château des Géants. He could not have understood the inertia of the Baron Frederick, who had the animal strength to live, to hunt, and drink, after so

many disasters, nor the devout impassiveness of the canoness, who feared, by taking any steps to recover her relation, to give greater publicity to the scandal of her adventure. We had combated this project of Albert's with terror, but he had persisted unknown to us. He departed one night, leaving a letter, which promised us a speedy return. His absence was, indeed, short, but how was it filled with sorrow!

"Disguised, he penetrated into Bohemia, and surprised the solitary Zdenko in the grotto of Schreckenstein. From thence he desired to write to his relations to make them acquainted with the truth, and to prepare them for the excitement of his return. He knew Amelia for the most courageous, though at the same time the most frivolous, and it was to her he proposed sending his first mission by Zdenko. At the moment of accomplishing this, and as Zdenko had issued upon the mountain at sunrise, he heard the report of a gun and a piercing scream. He rushed out, and the first object which met his eyes was Zdenko, carrying in his arms the bleeding Cynabre. To run towards his poor old dog, without thinking of concealing his face, was the first impulse of Albert; but as he was carring the faithful animal, wounded to death, towards the spot called the Cave of the Monk, he saw running towards him, as fast as old age and corpulence would allow, a hunter eager to pick up his game. It was the Baron Frederick, who, hunting in the covert with the first rays of morning, had mistaken in the twilight the fawn-coloured hide of Cynabre for the hide of a wild beast. He had taken aim through the branches. Alas! he yet possessed a just eye and sure hand; he had wounded him; he had lodged two balls in the flank. Suddenly he perceived Albert, and believing that he saw a spectre, he stopped petrified with terror. No longer retaining consciousness of any real danger, he recoiled, drew back to the edge of the steep path he had climbed, and rolled down a precipice, where he fell crushed upon the rocks. He expired upon the spot, upon the fatal place where had stood, for many centuries, the accursed tree, the famous oak of Schreckenstein, called the Hussite, witness and accomplice of the most horrible catastrophes.

"Albert saw his relation fall, and quitted Zdenko to run towards the edge of the abyss. There he saw the baron's people hastening to raise him, filling the air with their groans

and lamentations, for he gave no sign of life. These words reached Albert:—

"'He is dead, our poor master. Alas! what will madame la chanoinesse say?'

"Albert no longer thought of himself, he cried, he called aloud. As soon as they saw him a panic took possession of these credulous servants. Already were they abandoning the corpse of their master to fly, when old Hanz, the most superstitious as well as the most courageous of all, stopped them and said, while making the sign of the cross, 'My children, it is not our master, Albert, who appears to us. It is the spirit of Schreckenstein, which has taken his form to cause us all to perish here if we are cowardly. I saw him; it is he who caused the fall of monsieur le baron. He desires to carry off his corpse that he may devour it; it is a vampire! Come, take heart, my children. They say the devil is a coward. I will take aim at him; in the meantime do you repeat monsieur de chapelain's prayers of exorcism.' As he spoke thus, Hanz, having several times repeated the sign of the cross, raised his gun and fired at Albert, while the other servants pressed around the corpse of the baron. Happily, Hanz was too agitated and terrified to see clearly. The ball nevertheless whistled over the head of Albert, for Hanz was the best marksman of the country, and had he been self-possessed would certainly have killed my son. Albert paused irresolute. 'Courage children, courage!' cried Hanz, reloading his gun. 'Fire at him, he is frightened! You will not kill him, the balls cannot reach him, but you will make him recoil, and we shall have time to carry away the body of our poor master.' Albert, seeing all the guns directed against him, took refuge in the copse wood, and descending the side of the mountain without being seen, quickly assured himself by the evidence of his own eyes of the horrible truth. The crushed body of his unfortunate uncle lay upon the bloody stones. His skull was broken open, and the old Hanz cried in a voice of grief these terrible words: 'Pick up his brains and leave none upon the rocks, for the dog of the vampire will come and lick them up.'

"'Yes, yes, he had a dog,' replied another servant, 'a dog which at first I took for Cynabre.'

"'But Cynabre has disappeared since the death of Count

Albert,' said a third; 'he has been seen nowhere; he must have died in some corner, and the Cynabre we saw there is a ghost, as that vampire is also a ghost, resembling the Count Albert. Abominable vision! I shall always have it before my eyes. Oh, God! have pity upon us, and upon the soul of monsieur le baron, dead without receiving the sacrament through the malice of this spirit. Alas! I always told him that some misfortune would happen to him,' continued Hanz, in a lamentable tone, while gathering together the shreds of the baron's clothes, with hands stained by his blood: 'he would always come and hunt in this thrice-accursed place! He persuaded himself that, because no one else came near it, all the game of the forest would assemble here, and God knows! notwithstanding, that there has never been any other game on this infernal mountain than that which still hung in my youth to the branches of the oak. Accursed Hussite! tree of perdition! the fire of heaven has devoured it; but while a root of it remains in the earth the wicked Hussites will repair thither to avenge themselves upon the catholics. Come, come, let us quickly arrange this litter and depart! One is not in safety here. Ah! madame la chanoinesse, poor mistress! What will become of her? Who will dare be the first to present himself before her, to say to her, as in other days, 'Here is monsieur le baron returning from the chase.' She will say, 'Cause breakfast to be quickly served.' Ah! yes, breakfast indeed! Many a long day will pass before any one has an appetite in the château again. Come, come! there are too many misfortunes in that family, and I know well whence they come!'

"While they placed the corpse upon the litter, Hanz, pressed with questions, replied, shaking his head, 'In that family every one was pious, and died like a Christian, until the day when the Countess Wanda, upon whom may God have mercy! died without confession. From that time all have ended the same. Monsieur le Comte Albert did not die in a state of grace, whatever may have been said, and his worthy father suffered for it; and gave up his soul without knowing what he was doing; and here is another gone without the sacraments, and I would bet that the canoness comes to an end without having time to think about it. Fortunately for this holy woman, she is always in a state of grace!'

"Albert lost nothing of these deplorable discourses, the rude expression of true grief, and the terrible effect of the fanatical horror of which we were both the objects at Riesenburg. Stupified for a time, he saw in the distance, defiling through the paths of the ravine, the gloomy *cortége* which he dared not follow; though he felt that, in the natural order of things, he ought to have been the first to bear this sad news to his aged aunt, to aid her in her mortal sorrow. But it is quite certain that, had he done so, his apparition would have struck her with death or madness. He understood this, and retired in despair to his cavern, where Zdenko, who had seen nothing of the gravest accident of this fatal morning, was occupied in washing the wound of Cynabre; but it was too late. Cynabre, as he saw his master enter, uttered a groan of distress, crawled to him in spite of his broken back, and came to die at his feet, while receiving his last caresses. Four days after we saw Albert returning, pale and overwhelmed by these fresh blows. He remained severel days without speaking or weeping; at last his tears flowed in my bosom.

"Albert did not leave his country until assured that the canoness had survived this last shock of misfortune. This old woman, as delicate, and as strongly constituted as myself, knows also how to live from a feeling of duty. Respectable in her convictions and in her misfortunes, she counts with resignation the bitter days which the will of God still imposes upon her. But in her grief she preserves a certain stiff pride which survives her affections. She said lately to a person who wrote it to us; 'If we did not endure life from duty we must yet support it from respect to decency.' This sentence depicts the canoness to you.

"Thenceforth Albert thought no more of quitting us, and his courage seemed to grow with every trial. He appeared even to have conquered his love, and throwing himself actively into a philosophical life, seemed no longer occupied but with religion, moral science, and revolutionary action. He gave himself up to the most serious labours, and his vast intelligence thus took a development as serene and as magnificent as the existence his sad heart had known, afar from us, was excessive and feverish. This singular man was initiated into the most intimate confidences of the Invisibles, and took rank among the chiefs and the fathers of this new

church. He carried thither many lights which they received with love and gratitude. The reforms he proposed were accepted; and in the exercise of a militant faith he was restored to that hope and serenity of soul which makes heroes and martyrs. We thought that he had triumphed over his love for you, such care had he taken to conceal from us his struggles and his sufferings. But one day the correspondence of the adepts, which it was no longer possible to conceal from him, brought into our sanctuary some cruel news, spite of the uncertainty with which it was surrounded. You passed at Berlin in the minds of some persons for the mistress of the King of Prussia, and appearances did not give the lie to this supposition. Albert said nothing, but grew pale.

"'My well-beloved friend,' said he to me, after a few moments' silence, 'this time you will allow me to depart without fear; the duty of my love calls me to Berlin; my place is by the side of her whom I love and who has accepted my protection. I arrogate to myself no right over her; if she be intoxicated with the sad honour they attribute to her, I will use no authority to make her renounce it; but if, as I am certain, she is surrounded with snares and dangers, I shall know how to save her.'

"'Stay Albert,' I replied, 'and fear the power of this fatal passion which has already brought you so much suffering: the suffering which comes to you from that quarter is the only suffering beyond your strength. I see clearly that you only live for virtue and your love. If this love should perish within you, would virtue suffice you?'

"'And why should my love perish?' replied Albert with enthusiasm. 'You think, then, that she has already ceased to be worthy of it?'

"'And if it were so, Albert, what would you do?'

"He smiled with those pale lips and that brilliant look which his strong and sad thoughts of enthusiasm give him.

"'If it were so,' he replied, 'I should continue to love her, for the past is no dream to be effaced in me, and you know I have often confused it with the present to such a degree as to be no longer able to distinguish the one from the other. Well, I should do so still; I should love in the past that angelic face, that poet's soul, with which my gloomy life was suddenly lightened and inspired; and I should not

perceive that the past is behind me. I should preserve in my bosom the burning trace. The misguided being, the fallen angel, would still inspire me with such solicitude and tenderness, that my life would be consecrated to the consoling her for her fall, and in protecting her from the contempt of cruel man.'

"Albert departed for Berlin with several of our friends; and had for pretext with the Princess Amelia, his protectress, communications concerning Trenck, then a prisoner at Glatz, and the masonic operations into which she is initiated. You saw him presiding at a Rosicrucian lodge, and he did not know at the time that Cagliostro, informed in spite of us of his secrets, had made use of this circumstance to shake your reason in causing you to see him by stealth as a spectre. For this single act of having allowed to a profane person a *coup d'œil* into masonic mysteries, the intriguing Cagliostro would have deserved to be for ever excluded. But it was not known for a long time, and you must remember the terror he experienced while conducting you to the Temple. The penalties applicable to these betrayals are rigorously inflicted by the adepts, and the magician, in making use of the mysteries of his order for the pretended prodigies of his marvellous art, risked his life, perhaps, at least his great reputation as a necromancer, for he would have been unmasked and immediately expelled.

"During the short and mysterious sojourn which Albert made at this period at Berlin, he found means to penetrate sufficiently into your proceedings and thoughts to re-assure himself as to your position. He watched over you in secret, and returned tranquil in appearance, but more ardently in love with you than ever. For several months he travelled in disguise, serving our cause with activity. But having been warned that some intriguers, spies perhaps of the King of Prussia, were attempting to frame a private conspiracy at Berlin, dangerous to the existence of the masonic order, and probably fatal to Prince Henry, and his sister, the Abbess of Quedlimburg, Albert hastened to Berlin, that he might advertise these persons of the absurdity of such an attempt, and put them on their guard against the snare which seemed to threaten them. It was then you saw him, and though terrified at his apparition, you showed so much courage afterwards, and expressed yourself to his friends with such devo-

tion and respect for his memory, that the hope of being loved by you once more sprang up in his bosom. He was then resolved that you should learn the truth of his existence by a series of mysterious revelations. He was often near to you, concealed even in your apartment, during your stormy interviews with the king, without your being conscious of his presence. During this time the conspirators grew impatient at the obstacles which Albert and his friends threw in the way of their culpable and mad designs. The suspicions of Frederick too were roused. The apparition of the *Sweeper*, that spectre which all conspirators exhibit in the galleries of the palace, to foment disorder and fear, aroused his watchfulness. The creation of a masonic lodge, at the head of which Prince Henry placed himself, and which, at first starting, was found to be in opposition to the doctrines presided over by the king himself, appeared to Frederick an act significant of revolt; and perhaps, in truth, this creation of a new lodge was an unskilful work assumed by certain conspirators, as an attempt to compromise illustrious personages. Fortunately they escaped; and the king, apparently furious at finding only obscure culprits, but secretly satisfied not to be obliged to proceed against his own family, desired at least to make an example. My son, the most innocent of all, was arrested and transferred to Spandau, almost at the same time with yourself, whose innocence was not less established; but you had both committed the wrong of refusing to save yourselves at the expense of another, and thus you paid for the rest. You passed several months in prison, not far from the cell of Albert, and you must have heard the impassioned accents of his violin, as he heard those of your voice. He had at his service means of escape, prompt and certain; but he would not make use of them before he had secured yours. The golden key is stronger than all the bolts of the royal prisons; and the Prussian jailers, for the most part discontented soldiers or disgraced officers, are eminently corruptible. Albert escaped at the same time as you, but you did not see him; and, for reasons which you will know hereafter, Liverani was charged to conduct you here. Now you know the rest. Albert loves you more than ever; but he loves you better than himself, and he will be a thousand times less miserable at your happiness with another than he could be at his own, if you did not entirely share it. The moral and

philosophical laws, the religious authority under which you are each henceforth placed, permit his sacrifice, and render your choice free and respectable. Choose then, my daughter; but remember that the mother of Albert asks you on her knees not to aim a blow at the sublime truth of her son, by making for his sake a sacrifice, the bitterness of which will fall upon his life. Your desertion will make him suffer, but your pity without your love will kill him. The hour has come for you to determine. I must not know your decision. Go to your chamber; you will find two very different dresses; that which you choose will decide the fate of my son."

"And which of the two is to signify my divorce from him?" asked Consuelo, trembling.

"I was charged to tell you, but I will not; I desire to know if you will divine it."

The Countess Wanda, having thus spoken, replaced her mask, pressed Consuelo to her heart, and rapidly withdrew.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE two dresses which the neophyte found spread out in her chamber were, the one, a brilliant bridal robe, the other a mourning dress with all the distinguishing signs of widowhood. She hesitated for some moments. Her resolution as to the choice of the husband was taken; but which of these two costumes would be the outward evidence of her intention? After a little reflection she put on the white dress. the veil, the flowers, and the pearls of the bride. The attire was in exquisite taste and of extreme elegance. Consuelo was soon ready; but as she looked at herself in the mirror framed with menacing threats, she no longer felt inclined to smile as upon the first occasion. A mortal paleness overspread her features, terror was in her heart. Whatever course she might resolve to adopt, she felt that regret, almost remorse, would haunt her; that one heart would be broken by desertion; and a dark shade fell upon her spirits. As she her saw her cheeks and lips as white as her veil and her bouquet

of orange-flowers, she feared equally the effect which her appearance would produce on Albert and Liverani, and she was tempted to put on paint, but she as quickly abandoned the idea. "My face may deceive," thought she, "but can my heart deceive also?" She kneeled down by her bedside, and hiding her face in the drapery, she remained absorbed in sorrowful meditation until the clock struck midnight. Then she rose immediately, and saw an Invisible with a black mask standing behind her. Instinct told her it was Marcus. She was not deceived, and yet he did not make himself known to her, and contented himself with saying in a sad and gentle voice—

"Madame, all is ready. Will you wrap yourself in this cloak and follow me?"

Consuelo followed the Invisible to the extremity of the garden, where the river lost itself beneath the overshadowing branches of the trees. There she found an open gondola, painted black, and exactly resembling the gondolas of Venice, and in the gigantic boatman at the prow she recognised Karl, who made the sign of the cross as he saw her. It was his manner of expressing the greatest possible joy.

"Is it permitted me to speak to him?" asked Consuelo of her guide.

"You may say a few words aloud," he replied.

"Well, then, dear Karl, my deliverer and my friend," said Consuelo, who felt a thrill of delight at seeing a well-known face once more, after so long a seclusion among mysterious beings, "may I hope that nothing serves to lessen the pleasure you feel at finding me again."

"Nothing, signora," replied Karl, in a cheerful voice; "nothing, if it be not the remembrance of that which is no longer of this world, and which I fancy I always see by your side. Courage and contentment, my good mistress, my good sister! We are here as on the night when we fled from Spandau."

"This also is a day of deliverance, brother," said Marcus. "Come, row with that vigour and address with which you are gifted, and let the prudence of your tongue equal the strength of your arm. This does indeed resemble a flight," added he, addressing Consuelo; "but the principal deliverer is no longer the same."

As he pronounced these words, Marcus offered Consuelo

his hand to assist her to the cushioned bench. He felt her tremble slightly at the allusion to Liverani, and begged her to cover her face for a few moments only. Consuelo obeyed, and the gondola, urged by the robust arm of the deserter, glided rapidly over the gloomy and silent waters. After a short interval, the exact length of which Consuelo's disturbed state of mind did not enable her to ascertain, she heard a noise of voices and instruments at some distance, and received, without altogether stopping, the slight shock as of a boat touching the land. The hood which had covered her face, fell back gently, and the neophyte fancied she was passing from one dream to another, as she contemplated the fairy spectacle before her eyes. The bark was gliding along a sloping bank, covered thick with flowers and fresh herbage, while the wide expanse of the river was as were on fire, and reflected long colonnades of light on its glassy surface.

When Consuelo's eyes had become accustomed to this sudden light, she was enabled to fix them upon the illuminated façade of the palace, which rose at a little distance, and mirrored in the lake with magical splendour. This elegant edifice, the outline of which was relieved against the star-lit sky, these harmonious voices, this concert of instruments, these open windows, through which, between the curtains of purple glowing in the light, Consuelo saw a glittering throng of men and women richly dressed, sparkling with embroidery, diamonds, gold and pearls, with those powdered heads, which gave to the general aspect of all *réunions* of that period an indescribably effeminate and fantastic appearance; this princely *fête*, combined with the beauty of a night warm and serene, which diffused perfume and freshness even in the splendid saloons, filled Consuelo with emotion, and produced a species of intoxication. The daughter of the people, but also the queen of patrician *fêtes*, she could not behold a spectacle of this kind, after so many days of captivity, solitude, and gloomy reveries, without feeling a kind of transport, a desire to sing, a singular agitation of spirits as if about to appear before an audience. She stood up in the boat, which was drawing nearer and nearer to the chateau, and, suddenly excited by the chorus of Handel—

"Chantons la gloire
De Juda vainqueur—"

she forgot all else, and mingled her voice in the general tide

of harmony. But a fresh shock of the gondola, which, gliding close to the bank, sometimes struck against a branch or a tuft of grass, caused her to fall. Obliged to cling to the first hand which offered itself to support her, she then for the first time perceived that there was a fourth person in the skiff, a masked Invisible, who certainly was not there when she had entered. A large dark grey cloak, falling in large folds, a broad-brimmed hat worn in a certain fashion, an indescribable something in the features of this mask, through which the human physiognomy seemed to speak; but, above all, the pressure of the trembling hand which would not release her own, told Consuelo that the man she loved, the Chevalier Liverani, such has he had appeared to her for the first time on the lake at Spandau, was beside her. Then the music, the illumination, the enchanted palace, the intoxicating *fête*, and even the approach of the solemn moment which was to decide her destiny, all was effaced from Consuelo's memory. Agitated, and, as it were, conquered by a superhuman power, she fell back breathless upon the cushions of the gondola by the side of Liverani. The other unknown was standing at the prow, his back turned towards them. Her long fast, the narrative of the Countess Wanda, the dread of some terrible *dénouement*, the surprise of this *fête*, all overwhelmed Consuelo's strength. She was no longer conscious of anything but the hand of Liverani pressing her own, his arm around her waist in readiness to prevent her leaving him, and that heavenly charm which the presence of the beloved object sheds even upon the very air we breathe. Consuelo remained thus some moments, as unconscious of the glittering scene as if it had withdrawn into the deepest night; no longer hearing anything but the warm breathing of her lover, and the beatings of her own heart.

"Madame," said Marcus, suddenly turning towards her, "do you not know the air they are now singing, and would you not like to stop and listen to that magnificent tenor?"

"I know not what the air and voice may be," replied Consuelo, absently; "let us stop or go on as you please."

The gondola now almost touched the walls of the chateau. Figures could be distinguished in the embrasures of the windows, and even those which passed to and fro through the apartment. They were no longer shadows floating as in a dream, but real personages, noblemen, great ladies, philo-

sophers, and artists, several of whom were not unknown to Consuelo. But she made no attempt to remember their names, or the theatres or palaces where she had seen them. The world had suddenly become to her a magic lantern, without meaning and without interest. The only being who appeared living in the universe was he whose hand secretly pressed her own beneath the folds of the cloak.

"Do you not know that fine voice which is singing a Venetian air?" asked Marcus again, surprised at the immobility and apparent indifference of Consuelo.

And as she appeared neither to hear his voice nor that of the singer, he drew nearer and seated himself opposite her, in order to repeat his question.

"A thousand pardons, monsieur!" replied Consuelo, making an effort to listen; "I was not paying attention. I do, indeed, know that voice and the air, which I myself composed some time ago. It is a very poor production, and very badly sung."

"What is the name of this singer, then," returned Marcus, "upon whom I think you are too severe? I think him admirable!"

"Ah! you have not lost it?" said Consuelo, in a low voice to Liverani, who hod just placed in her hand the little filigree cross from which she had parted for the first time in her life when confiding it to him during her journey to Spandau.

"You do not remember the name of that singer?" obstinately repeated Marcus, attentively observing the features of Consuelo.

"Pardon me, monsieur!" she replied, somewhat impatiently; "he is called Anzoleto. Ah! that false *re!* He has lost the note!"

"Do you not wish to see his face? You are perhaps mistaken. From this you can distinguish him perfectly, for I can seem him clearly. He is a very handsome young man."

"What is the use of looking at him?" returned Cansuelo, rather warmly. "I am quite sure that he is the same."

Marcus took Consuelo's hand gently, and Liverani offering his; they assisted her to rise and look through the open window. Consuelo, who might perhaps have resisted the one, yielded to the other, and threw a glance upon the

handsome Venetian, who was at that moment the centre of attraction for more than a hundred women, who gazed at him with admiring looks.

"He has grown very stout!" said Consuelo, seating herself again, and gently resisting the efforts of Liverani, who attempted to take back the little cross, which he succeeded in effecting.

"Is that all the remembrance you condescend to bestow on an old friend?" said Marcus, who, through his mask, kept a lynx eye upon her.

"He was only a comrade," replied Consuelo; "and comrades, with us, are not always friends."

"But would you not feel some pleasure in talking to him? If we should enter this palace, and they should ask you to sing with him?"

"If it be a trial," said Consuelo, with same sharpness, for she began to observe Marcus's perseverance, "and as I must obey you in all things, I will yield myself willingly to this. But if it be for my pleasure you make this offer, I should prefer to decline it."

"Am I to stop here, my brother?" said Karl, giving a military signal with his oar.

"Pass on, brother!" replied Marcus. Karl obeyed; and in a few moments, the gondola, having crossed the lake, shot beneath a thick bower. The darkness here was profound. The tiny lamp suspended from the gondola alone threw a blueish light over the surrounding foliage. From time to time, through an opening in the dark mass of verdure, the lights of the palace were still to be seen sparkling afar off. By degrees the sounds of the orchestra slowly died away, and as the bark glided along the shore, the oars came in contact with the flowers, and the black cloak of Consuelo was strewed with the fragrant petals. She now began to reflect, and to combat this indefinable charm of love and night. She had withdrawn her hand from that of Liverani, and her heart sank in proportion as the veil of intoxication fell before the light of reason.

"Listen, madame!" said Marcus. "Do you not hear the applause of the audience? Yes, that is indeed the clapping of hands and acclamations! They are enchanted with what they have just heard. This Anzoleto has had great success at the palace."

"They do not know him!" said Consuelo, brusquely, seizing the flower of a magnolia which Liverani had just gathered, and thrown furtively into her lap. She pressed the flower convulsively in her hands, and hid it in her bosom, as the last relic of undying love which a fatal trial was about to sanctify or break for ever.

The bark at last touched the shore at the junction of the gardens and the woods, in a picturesque spot, where the river flowed among rocks and ceased to be navigable. Consuelo had but little time to examine the wild landscape which was lighted up by the moon. They were still within the wide domains of the palace; but art was only applied here to preserve nature in her primitive beauty: the old trees planted by chance amidst the gglossy turf, the gentle undulations of the ground, the surrounding hills, the dashing cascades, the troops of bounding and timid deer.

Here a new personage arrested the attention of Consuelo; this was Gottlieb, who was seated carelessly upon the handle of a sedan chair, in the attitude of calm and thoughful musing. He trembled as he recognised his friend of the prison, but at a sign from Marcus he abstained from speaking to her.

"You forbid this poor fellow, then, to press my hand?" said Consuelo, in a low tone, to her guide.

"After your initiation you will be at liberty in all your actions," he replied in the same tone. "Content yourself now with seeing how much the health of Gottlieb is improved, and how his physical strength is restored."

"May I not know at least," replied the neophyte, "whether he suffered persecution for my sake after my flight from Spandau? Forgive my impatience. This thought has never ceased to torment me since the day I saw him passing the court-yard of the pavilion."

"He did suffer," replied Marcus, but not long. As soon as he learned of your escape, he boasted with artless enthusiasm of having contributed towards it, and his involuntary disclosures during his sleep had almost proved fatal to some of us. They attempted to shut him up in a madhouse, as much to punish him as to prevent him from assisting other prisoners. It was then he fled; and as we had our eye upon him, we caused him to be conducted hither, where we have since lavished every care upon his mind and body. We shall restore him to his family and his country, when we have

given him the strength and prudence necessary to labour usefully in our work, which has become his own, for he is one of the purest and most fervent of our adepts. But the chair is ready, madame; will you enter it? I will not leave you, though I intrust you to the sure and faithful arms of Karl and Gottlieb."

"Consuelo immediately seated herself in the chair, which was closed on all sides, and only admitted the air through a few chinks in the roof. She then ceased to see what was passing around her. At times she perceived the stars shining, and thus judged that she was still in the open air; at others she saw their light interrupted without being able to distinguish whether it were by buildings or by the thick shadow of the trees. The porters walked rapidly on in the most profound silence, while she endeavoured for sometime to distinguish by the sound of their footsteps whether there were four or three persons only accompanying her. Several times she thought she recognised the footsteps of Liverani on the right of her chair; but this might be only an illusion, and, moreover, she felt that she ought to try not to think of him.

When the chair stopped and was opened, Consuelo could not avoid a feeling of terror, as she saw herself beneath the portcullis of an old feudal tower. The moon was pouring a flood of light on the court-yard, which was covered with buildings in ruins, and filled with persons dressed in white, who came and went, some alone, others in groups like spectres. The black and massive archway of the entrance lent a most fantastic and transparent blue to the distance. These restless shadows, some silent, others speaking in a low voice, their noiseless movement over the long grass of the court, the appearance of these ruins, which Consuelo recognised as those into which she had once penetrated, and in which she had seen Albert, made such an impression upon her, that she was seized with a species of superstitious terror. She instinctively looked around for Leverani. He was indeed with Marcus, but the obscurity of the vault did not allow her to distinguish which of the two offered her his hand; and this time, her heart, paralysed by a sudden sadness, an indefinable fear, did not inform her.

They threw her cloak over her dress, and drew the hood around her head, so that she could see all without herself being seen by any one. Some one then told her, in a low

voice, not to allow a single word, a single exclamation, to escape her, whatever she might see; and she was thus conducted to the extremity of the court-yard, where a strange spectacle did indeed offer itself to her eyes.

A bell, of faint and gloomy tone, was summoning the shadows towards the ruined chapel where Consuelo had formerly sought refuge against the storm. This chapel was now illuminated by wax tapers, disposed in systematic order. The altar appeared to have been recently erected; it was covered with a pall, and decorated with singular designs, in which the emblems of Christianity were mingled with those of Judaism, as well as with Egyptian hieroglyphics, and various cabalistic signs. In the middle of the choir, which was enclosed with symbolic columns and balustrades, was a bier surrounded by tapers, covered with cross-bars, and surmounted by a death's head, in which burned a blood-coloured flame. Towards this cenotaph was led a young man, whose features Consuelo could not see; a large bandage covered the half of his face: he was a candidate, and appeared overcome by fatigue or emotion. He had one arm and one leg naked, his hands were tied behind his back, and his white robe was spotted with blood. A ligature round the arm seemed to indicate that he had been just bled. Two shadows waved torches of lighted resin around his head, and scattered clouds of smoke and lighted sparks over his face and breast. Then there commenced a singular dialogue between him and those who presided over the ceremony, and who wore distinguishing marks of their various dignities, which recalled to Consuelo that which Cagliostro had caused her to overhear at Berlin between Albert and some unknown personages. Then several spectres, who were armed with swords, and whom she heard called the *Terrible Brothers*, stretched the candidate upon the flags, pressing the point of their weapons against his heart, while several others began, with a great clashing of swords, a desperate combat, some pretending to prevent the admission of the new brother, treating him as perverse, unworthy, and a traitor, while the rest declared that they fought for him in the name of truth and acquired right. This strange scene produced the effect of a painful dream upon Consuelo. This struggle, these threats, this magic faith, the groans which the young adolescents uttered around the bier, were so well simulated, that a spectator

not previously initiated would have been really terrified. When the god-fathers of the candidate had conquered in the dispute and in the combat against their opponents, they raised him up, placed a poignard in his hand, and ordered him to walk straight before him, and to strike whoever should oppose his entrance to the temple. Consuelo saw no more. At the moment when the newly-initiated, with arm uplifted, and in a sort of delirium, approached a low door to which he was directed, the two guides, who had not quitted their hold of Consuelo's arm, led her rapidly away, as though to conceal from her the sight of some horrible spectacle; then drawing the hood over her face, they conducted her by numerous turnings, and among ruins over which she stumbled more than once, into a place where the most profound silence reigned. There they uncovered her face, and she found herself in the large octagon apartment where she had formerly witnessed the interview between Albert and Trenck. All the openings were this time carefully closed and veiled; the walls and the ceiling were hung with black; wax tapers were burning in a particular order differing from that of the chapel. An altar in the form of Mount Calvary, surmounted with three crosses, concealed the large chimney. A tomb upon which were disposed a hammer, nails, a spear, and a crown of thorns, was erected in the middle of the room. Personages, dressed in black, and masked, were kneeling or sitting around upon a carpet sprinkled with silver tears. They neither wept nor sighed; their attitude was that of austere meditation, or of deep and silent sorrow. Consuelo's guides made her approach almost close to the bier; and the men who guarded it having risen and arranged themselves at the other extremity, one of the two thus spoke:—

"Consuelo, you have just seen the ceremony of a masonic reception. You have seen there, as here, as unknown faith, mysterious signs, funereal images, initiatory pontiffs, a bier. What have you understood by this feigned scene, by these trials, so terrible to the candidate, by the words which have been addressed to him, and by these manifestations of respect, love, and grief around an illustrious tomb?"

"I know not if I have understood aright," replied Consuelo. "This scene agitates me; this ceremony seems to me barbarous. I pity this candidate, whose courage and virtue have been submitted to material trials only, as if physical

courage were sufficient for initiation into a work requiring moral courage. I blame what I have seen, and deplore these cruel forms of a gloomy fanaticism, or these childish experiences of an outward and idolatrous faith. I have heard obscure enigmas proposed, and the explanations which have been given to the candidate appeared to me dictated by an unbelieving or a brutal catechist. Nevertheless, this bloody tomb, this immolated victim, this ancient myth of Hiram, the divine architect, assassinated by jealous and avaricious workmen, this sacred word lost for so many centuries, and promised to the initiated as the magic key which is to open to him the gate of the temple; all this appears to me a symbol not without grandeur and interest, but why is the fable so badly woven, or why does it admit of so false an interpretation?"

"What do you mean? Have you listened attentively to this narrative, which you treat as a fable?"

"This is what I understood, and what I have previously learned in the books which I was desired to study during my retirement:—Hiram, the conductor of the works in the temple of Solomon, divided the workmen into classes, which received different salaries and possessed unequal rights. Three ambitious members of the lowest class resolved to participate in the salary reserved for the rival class, and to force from Hiram the word of command, the secret formula which served to distinguish the companions from the master at the solemn hour of distribution. They laid in wait for him in the temple, in which he had remained alone after this ceremony, and posting themselves at each of the three outlets from the holy place, they prevented his departure, threatened him, beat him cruelly, and finally assassinated him, without being able to wrest from him his secret, the fatal word which was to render them equal to himself and his privileged fellows. Then they carried away his body, and buried it beneath the rubbish; and from that day the faithful adepts of the temple, the friends of Hiram, have mourned the fatal end, have sought for the sacred word, and rendered almost divine honours to his memory."

"And now, how do you explain this myth?"

"I meditated upon it before I came here, and this is how I understand it. Hiram is the cold intellect and governing science of ancient societies, which are founded upon inequal-

ity of condition: upon the *régime* of cast. This Egyptian fable corresponded with the mysterious despotism of the hierophants. The three ambitious members are Indignation, Rebellion, and Vengeance; those who attempt to seize their right by violence are, perhaps, the three classes inferior to the sacerdotal class. Hiram assassinated his Despotism, which has lost its power and *prestige*, and which has gone down to the tomb, carrying with it the secret of governing men by blindness and superstition."

"Is it thus, indeed, you interpret this myth?"

"I have read in your books that it was brought from the East by the templars, and that they made use of it in their initiations. They must, therefore, have interpreted it somewhat in this manner; but in baptising Hiram, the Theocracy, and the assassins, Impiety, Anarchy, and Ferocity, the templars, who desired to subject society to a species of monastic despotism, mourned their impotence, which was personified by the destruction of Hiram. The watchword of their empire, lost and found again, was that of association or craft, like the ancient *cité*, or the temple of Osiris. This is why I am surprised to see this fable still adopted in your initiations to the work of universal deliverance. I am anxious to believe that it is only proposed to your adepts as a trial of their intelligence and courage."

"Well, we, who did not invent these masonic forms, and who, indeed, use them but as moral trials—we, who are now the companions and masters in this symbolic science, since, having passed through all the masonic grades, we have reached a point at which we are no longer masons, at least as the word is understood in the common ranks of the order—we conjure you to explain to us the myth of Hiram, as you understand it, that we may pronounce upon your zeal, your intelligence and faith, the judgment which will stop you here at the door of the true temple, or which will throw open the sanctuary to you."

"You ask me to tell you the word of Hiram—*the lost word*. It is not that which will open the gates of the temple to me, for this word is *tyranny* or *falsehood*. But I know the true words, the names of the three doors of the divine edifice by which the destroyers of Hiram entered, to force their chief to bury himself beneath the ruins of his work: they are Liberty, Fraternity, Equality."

"Consuelo, your interpretation, whether correct or not, reveals to us the nobleness of your heart. You are therefore excused from ever kneeling upon the tomb of Hiram, neither shall you pass through the grade in which the neophyte prostrates himself before the image of the remains of Jacques Molay, the grand master and the grand victim of the temple, of the soldier-monks and prelate-knights of the middle ages. You issue victorious from this second trial as from the first. You can discern the lying traces of a fanatic barbarism, still necessary as formulas of trial to minds imbued with the principle of inequality. Remember, then, that the freemasons of the highest grades aspire only, for the most part, to construct a profane temple: a mysterious shelter for an association elevated to the highest rank. You understand their purpose otherwise, and you would march directly to the universal temple which receives all men to one faith, to one law. Nevertheless, you must here take a last stand, and prostrate yourself before this tomb. You must adore Christ, and recognise in him the only true God."

"You say that to try me yet once more," replied Consuelo, with firmness; "but you have deigned to open my eyes to lofty truths, in teaching me to read your secret books. Christ is a divine man, whom we revere as the greatest philosopher and the greatest saint of ancient times. We adore him as much as it is permitted to us to adore the greatest of masters and martyrs. We may well call him the Saviour of men, in this sense: that he taught to those of his own time truths of which before they had only glimpses, and which were to bring to humanity a new era of light and holiness. We may well kneel before his image, to thank God for having created such a prophet, such an example, such a friend; but we adore God in him, and we do not commit the crime of idolatry. We distinguish the divinity of the revelation from that of the revealer. I consent, then, to render to these emblems of an eternally illustrious and sublime sacrifice, the homage of pious gratitude and filial enthusiasm; but I do not believe that the final word of revelation was understood and proclaimed by the men of Jesus's time, for it has not yet been officially announced upon earth. I expect, from the wisdom and faith of his disciples, from the continuation of his work through seventeen ages, a more practical truth, a more complete application of the holy word

and its fraternal doctrine. I await the development of the Gospel: I expect something more than equality before God; I expect and I invoke it among men."

"Your words are audacious, and your doctrines are full of danger. Have you well reflected upon them in solitude? Have you calculated the misfortunes which your new faith will heap beforehand on your head? Do you know the world and your own strength? Do you know that we are as one against a hundred thousand in the most civilised countries of the globe? Do you know that at the period in which we are living, between those who render to the sublime revealer Jesus a gross and injurious worship, and those, henceforth almost as numerous, who deny his mission, and even his existence—between idolators and atheists, there is no room for us to breathe the air of heaven, save in the midst of the persecutions, the mockeries, the hate, and the contempt of the human species? Do you know that in France, at this very time, Rosseau and Voltaire are almost equally proscribed: the religious and the unbelieving philosopher? Do you know—yet more fearful and unparalleled fact!—that from the depths of their exile they proscribe each other? Do you know that you are about to return to a world where all things will conspire to shake your faith and to corrupt your mind? Do you know, in short, that you must exercise your apostleship in the midst of perils, doubts, deceptions, and sufferings?"

"I am resolved to do so," replied Consuelo, with downcast eyes, and placing her hand on her heart. "May God support me!"

"Well then, my daughter," said Marcus, who still held Consuelo by the hand, "you are about to be subjected by us to some moral sufferings, not to make trial of your faith, which we can no longer doubt, but to fortify it. It is not in the calm of repose, nor amidst the pleasures of the world, but in sorrow and tears, that faith grows and strengthens. Do you feel sufficient courage to brave painful emotions, and, it may be, to combat terrors?"

"If it must be so, and if my soul will profit by it, I submit myself to your will," replied Consuelo, somewhat dejectedly.

Immediately the Invisibles began to remove the carpet and the torches which surrounded the bier. The bier itself was rolled into one of the deep recesses of the window, and

several adepts, having armed themselves with crowbars, hastened to raise a round stone which occupied the centre of the apartment. Consuelo then saw a circular opening, sufficiently large to admit one person, the granite edges of which, blackened and worn by time, were manifestly as ancient as the rest of the architecture of the tower. A long ladder was brought and lowered into the gloomy opening. Then Marcus, leading Consuelo to the brink, asked her three times, in a solemn tone, if she felt strength sufficient to descend alone into the subterranean vaults of the great feudal tower.

"Listen, fathers or brothers, for I know not which to call you," replied Consuelo.

"Call them brothers," returned Marcus. "You are here among the Invisibles, your equals in rank if you persevere an hour longer. You are about to bid them adieu here, to meet them again in an hour in the presence of the council of supreme chiefs—of those whose voices they never hear, whose faces they see. Those you will call your fathers. They are the sovereigh pontiffs—the spiritual and temporal chiefs of our temple. We shall appear before them and before you with uncovered faces, if you are firmly determined to rejoin us at the door of the sanctuary by this gloomy and terror-strewed path which here yawns beneath your feet, in which you must walk alone, and with no other shield than your own courage and perseverance."

"I will walk in it, if it must be so," replied the neophyte, trembling; "but this trial, which you announce as so severe, is it then inevitable? Oh, my brethren! you would not, doubtless, trifle with the already over-taxed reason of a simple and unpretending woman? You have condemned me to-day to a long fast; and though emotion has stilled the pangs of hunger for several hours, I feel myself physically weak. I know not if I shall not sink beneath the task you impose upon me. I care but little, I swear to you, that my body should suffer and fail; but do not you consider that as a moral cowardice which is after all but a failing of nature! Tell me that you will forgive me if I display the weakness of a woman, provided that when restored to consciousness I have still the heart of a man."

"Poor child!" replied Marcus; "I would rather that you should confess your weakness than seek to mislead us by a

foolish boldness. We will consent, if you wish it, to give you a guide, one only, to assist and succour you at need in your pilgrimage. My brother," he added, addressing the Chevalier Liverani, who had remained during this conversation near the door, with his eyes fixed upon Consuelo, "take the hand of your sister, and conduct her by the subterranean passages to the general rendezvous."

"And you, my brother," said Consuelo, bewildered, "will you not also accompany me?"

"It is impossible. You can have but one guide, and he whom I appoint is the only one I am permitted to give you."

"I will have courage," replied Consuelo, folding her cloak around her: "I will go alone."

"You refuse the arm of a brother and a friend?"

"I refuse neither his sympathy nor his interest; but I shall go alone."

"Go then, noble daughter, and fear nothing. She who descended alone into the Fountain of Tears at Riesenberg, she who braved so many dangers to find the concealed grotto of Schreckenstein, will without difficulty penetrate the recesses of our pyramid. Go, then like the young heroes of antiquity, and seek your initiation through the trials and sacred mysteries. Brothers, present her the cup, that precious relic which a descendant of Ziska brought among us, and with which we consecrate the august sacrament of fraternal communion." Liverani took from the altar a roughly worked chalice in wood, and having filled it, presented Consuelo with bread.

"My sister," said Marcus, "our fathers, the martyrs of the Saborite church, thought that the intervention of impious and sacrilegious priests was not of equal value in the consecration of the august sacrament with the pure hands of a woman or a child. Communicate then with us here, while waiting to take your seat at the banquet of the temple, where the grand mystery of the supper will be more fully revealed to you. Take this cup, and drink the first. If you have faith in the act, a few drops of the beverage will be of sovereign strength to your body and your fervent soul will bear your whole being onwards upon wings of flame."

Consuelo, having first drunk, handed the cup of Liverani, who had presented her with it; and when he in his turn had drunk, he passed it the rest of the brothers. Marcus,

having drained the last drops, blessed Consuelo, and invited the assembly to pray for her; then he presented the neophyte with a small silver lamp, and assisted her to place her feet upon the upmost rounds of the ladder.

"I need not tell you," he added, "that no danger threatens your life; but tremble for your soul; tremble less you may never arrive at the door of the temple, if you have the misfortune to look behind you but once. You will halt several times in various places; you must then examine everything which presents itself to your eyes; but as soon as the door is opened before you, pass through it and do not turn back. This, as you know, is the rigid conditions of the initiations of old. You must, also, according to the ancient rites, carefully preserve the flame of your lamp, the emblem of your faith and zeal. Go, my daughter, and let this thought inspire you with superhuman courage; what you are now condemned to suffer is necessary to the development of your mind and heart in virtue and the true faith."

Consuelo cautiously descended the ladder, and as soon as she had reached the bottom it was withdrawn, and she heard the heavy stone fall with a loud noise and close the subterranean entrance above her head.

CHAPTER XXIX.

At first Consuelo, passing from an apartment blazing with the lustre of a hundred torches, to a place lighted only by the small lamp she held, could distinguish nothing but a luminous mist around her, through which her sight could not pierce. But by degrees her eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, and as she perceived nothing but an apartment in size and form exactly like that she had just quitted, she gathered courage to approach and examine the strange characters on the walls.

It was one long inscription, arranged in several circular lines which extended around the hall, the walls of which presented no opening. As she made this observation, Consuelo did not ask herself how she should get out of this

dungeon, but what could have been the use of such a construction. Gloomy thoughts, which she at first repulsed, pressed upon her mind, and soon these ideas were confirmed by the inscription which she read, walking slowly, and lifting her lamp to a level with the characters:—

"Contemplate the beauty of these walls, formed out of the rock, four-and-twenty feet in thickness, and standing for a thousand years. Neither the action of time nor the labours of workmen have been able to injure them! This *chef-d'œuvre* of architectural masonry was raised by the hands of slaves, doubtless to conceal the treasures of some magnificent master. Yes! to secrete in the bowels of the mountain treasures of hatred and revenge. Here have perished, here have suffered, here have wept, raved, and blasphemed, twenty generations of men, the greater part innocent, some heroic, all victims or martyrs; prisoners of war, revolted serfs too heavily taxed to pay new taxes, religious reformers, sublime heretics, the unfortunate, the conquered, fanatics, saints; also villains, men inured to the ferocity of the camp, to the law of murder and pillage, subjected, in their turn, to a terrible retribution. Here are the catacombs of feudality, of military or religious despotism. Here the habitations which men in power caused to be constructed for their oppressed fellow-beings, that they might stifle the cries and conceal the corpses of their conquered and enslaved brethren. Here, with scarce air to breathe, where not a ray of daylight penetrates, where there is not a stone on which to lay the head, only iron rings fastened to the wall through which to pass the prisoner's chains, and prevent him from choosing a place of repose on the damp and chilly soil. Air, light, and nourishment admitted only when it pleased the sentinels to open the cavern for a moment to throw in a piece of bread among a hundred unfortunate creatures heaped upon one another the day after a battle, and wounded or bruised for the most part. Sometimes, still more horrible, one alone remained alive, dying in suffering and despair in the midst of the putrefied corpses of his companions, not unfrequently eaten by the same worms before death, and falling into putrefaction himself before the feeling of life and the horror of reflection were annihilated in his brain. Here, oh neophyte! is the source of human grandeur which you have perhaps contemplated even

with admiration in the world of the powerful! Fleshless skulls, withered and broken human bones, tears, drops of blood; these are the signification of your armorial bearings, if your fathers have bequeathed to you the blot of patricianship; this is what should be represented as the escutcheon of those princes whom you have served, or whom you aspire to serve, if you have sprung from the people. Yes, here is the foundation of all titles of nobility; here the source of the hereditary glories and riches of this world: it is thus that a class has arisen and been preserved whom all other classes dread, yet flatter and caress. Behold here what men have invented to raise themselves from father to son above their fellows!"

Having read this inscription while thrice making the tour of the dungeon, Consuelo, overwhelmed with grief and terror, placed her lamp upon the ground and kneeled down to rest herself. A profound silence reigned in this gloomy place, and frightful reflections crowded upon her. The lively imagination of Consuelo evoked around her gloomy visions. She thought she saw livid shadows covered with hideous wounds gliding about the walls or crawling on the ground by her side. She thought she heard their lamentable sighs, their groans of agony, their feeble breathings, the rattling of their chains. She resuscitated in her thought the life of the past, such as it must have been in the middle ages, such as it had been even of late in the religious wars. She thought she heard above her, in the guard-house, the heavy and ominous steps of iron-shod men; the sound of their pikes on the pavement; their brutal laughter; their drunken songs; their threats and oaths when the lamentations of their victims, ascending even to them, interrupted their horrible sleep, for they had slept, these jailors; they were obliged to sleep; they had been able to sleep over this dungeon, over this abyss of infection, whence exhaled the miasma of the tomb, and the groans and howlings of the infernal regions. Pale, her eyes fixed, and every vein thrilling with horror, Consuelo no longer heard or saw anything. When she returned to the consciousness of existence, and strove to shake off the chill which was gaining upon her, she perceived that a stone in the pavement had been raised during her painful trance, and that a new path was open before her. She approached, and saw a narrow and abrupt flight of stairs,

which she descended with difficulty, and which conducted her into a fresh cave, more confined than the first. As she touched the ground, which was soft and damp beneath her feet, Consuelo lowered her lamp to see if she were not sinking in the mud. But she found only a gray dust, finer than the finest sand, and here and there showing, like flint-stones, the top of a thigh-bone, the remains of a skull, a jaw still furnished with white and solid teeth, in evidence of the youth and strength suddenly destroyed by a silent death. Some few skeletons, almost entire, had been drawn from this dust and ranged against the wall. There was one in perfect preservation, standing chained by the middle of the body, as if it had been condemned to perish there without being able to lie down. The body, instead of yielding and falling forward, bent and dislocated, had stiffened, and was thrown back in an attitude of superb pride and implacable disdain. The ligaments of the frame and members were ossified. The head, upraised, appeared to be looking at the vaulted roof; and the teeth, clenched by contraction of the jaws, appeared to laugh with a terrible expression, or in a transport of sublime fanaticism. Above him, his name and history were written in large red characters upon the wall. It was some unknown martyr of religious persecution, and the last of the victims immolated in that place. At his feet was kneeling a skeleton, whose head, detached from the vertebræ, lay upon the pavement, but whose stiffened arms still embraced the knees of the martyr: this was his wife.

Among other details, the inscription set forth:—

"N—— perished here with his wife, his three brothers, and his two children, because he refused to abjure the faith of Luther, and because he persisted, even under torture, to deny the infallibility of the Pope. He died standing and withered —petrified, as it were, and unable to look upon his family dying at his feet on the ashes of his friends and forefathers."

Opposite this inscription was to be seen the following:—

"Neophyte, the friable soil you tread is twenty feet deep. It is neither sand nor earth; it is human dust. This spot was the cemetery of the chateau. It was here they threw those who expired in the dungeon above, when there was no more room for fresh comers. This is the dust of twenty generations of victims. Happy and fortunate the patricians

who can count among their ancestors twenty generations of assassins and executioners!"

Consuelo was less terrified with the appearance of these funeral objects than she had been in the dungeon by the suggestions of her own fancy. There is something too grave and too solemn in the aspect of death itself, to allow the weakness of fear and the heartrendings of pity to obscure the enthusiasm or the serenity of strong and believing souls. In the presence of these relics the noble adept of the religion of Albert felt more of respect and charity than terror and consternation. She kneeled before the remains of the martyr, and feeling her moral courage returning, she cried, kissing that fleshless hand:—

"Oh! it is not the august spectacle of a glorious destruction which can excite horror and pity; it is rather the idea of life struggling with the torments of agony. It is the thought of what must have passed in those desolate souls, which fills with bitterness and terror the thoughts of the living! But thou, unfortunate victim, didst die standing, thy head turned towards heaven; thou art not to be pitied, for thou didst not give way, and thy soul exhaled in a transport of fervour which fills me with veneration!"

Consuelo rose slowly, and with a kind of calmness detached the wedding veil which was fastened to the bones of the woman kneeling by her side. A low and narrow door opened before her. She took her lamp, and careful not to turn, entered a dark and narrow passage with an abrupt descent. On her right and left she saw the entrances of dungeons, almost concealed beneath the mass of a truly sepulchral architecture. These prisons were too low to allow of any one standing upright within them, and scarcely long enough to admit of their lying down. They appeared to be the work of the Cyclops, so strongly were they constructed, and so skilfully managed in the massiveness of the masonry, as if to serve as dens for ferocious and dangerous animals. But Consuelo was not to be deceived; she had seen the arenas of Verona: she knew that the tigers and bears, formerly reserved for the amusements of the circus, for the combats of the gladiators, were a thousand times better lodged. Moreover, she read upon the iron doors that these dungeons had been preserved for conquered princes, for valiant captains, for prisoners the most important and power-

ful, either from rank, intelligence, or energy. Such formidable precautions against their escape evinced the love or respect with which they had inspired their partisans. Here had been silenced the roaring of those lions which had caused the world to tremble at their challenge. Their power and fortitude had been crushed against an angle of the wall; their Herculean breasts had become exhausted while searching for a breath of air through an almost imperceptible opening, cut in a slanting direction through twenty-four feet of stone. Their eagle glance had dimmed while seeking for a ray of light in the eternal gloom. Here had been buried alive those men whom they dared not destroy openly. Illustrious heads, magnanimous hearts, had here expiated the exercise, and doubtless also, the abuse of power.

Having wandered for some time in these damp and obscure galleries cut in the rock, Consuelo heard a noise of running water, which reminded her of the terrible subterranean torrent at Riesenburg; but she was too much pre-occupied with the crimes and misfortunes of humanity to think long of herself. She was obliged to slacken her pace for a time while making the circuit of a well which was on a level with the surface, and lighted by a torch. Beneath the torch she read on a post these few words, which required no comment: "It was here they drowned them."

Consuelo leaned over to look at the inside of the well. The water of the rivulet, over which she had glided so peacefully but an hour before, was engulphed here at a frightful depth, and whirled roaring as though eager to seize a victim. The red light of the torch gave to these gloomy waves the colour of blood.

At last Consuelo arrived before a massive door, which she vainly endeavoured to open. She asked herself whether, as in the initiations of the Egyptian pyramids, she was about to be raised into the air by invisible chains, while a gulf would open beneath her feet, and a sudden and violent wind would extinguish her lamp. Another fear more seriously affected her. Ever since entering the gallery she had perceived that she was not alone; some one followed on her steps so softly that she could not catch the slightest noise; but she thought she had felt the rustle of a dress against her own; and as she had passed the well, the light of the torch behind had thrown on the wall two vacillating shadows

instead of one. Who, then, was this formidable companion at whom she was forbidden to look, under penalty of losing the fruits of her labour, and of never crossing the threshold of the temple? Was it some frightful spectre, whose hideousness would have frozen her courage and disturbed her reason? She no longer saw the shadow, but she imagined that she heard the sound of breathing close to her. And this fatal door which refused to open! The two or three minutes which now passed appeared to her an age. This dumb acolyte terrified her: she feared lest he should tempt her by speaking, or force her by some trick, to look at him. Her heart beat violently; at last she saw that an inscription still remained for her to read above the door:—

"Here the last trial awaits you, and it is the most cruel of all. If your courage is exhausted, strike two blows upon the left panel of this door; if not, strike three upon the right. Remember that the glory of your initiation will be proportioned to your efforts."

Consuelo did not hesitate, but struck three blows upon the right. The door opened as if of itself, and she entered a vast hall lighted with numerous torches. There was no one in it; and at first she understood nothing of the strange objects symmetrically arranged around. They consisted of machines of wood, iron, and bronze, the use of which was unknown to her; of strange arms spread upon tables or hung against the wall. For a moment she believed herself in an artillery museum, for there were indeed muskets, connons, culverins, and a whole assemblage of instruments of war. All the means of destruction invented by men for the immolation of their fellow-beings appeared to be there gathered together. But when the neophyte had advanced a few steps across the arsenal, she saw other objects of a more refined barbarity: wheels, saws, melting-tubs, pulleys, hooks, a whole museum of instruments of torture; and upon upon a large board in the centre, surmounting a trophy formed of stakes, pincers, chisels, files, saws, and all the most abominable implements of torment, was written: "They are all precious, all authentic; they have been used."

At this Consuelo felt her whole being sink. A cold sweat moistened the tresses of her hair. Her heart ceased to beat. Incapable of escaping from the horror of this spectacle and the cruel visions which crowded upon her, she examined what

was before her with that stupid and fatal curiosity which takes possession of us in the excess of terror. Instead of closing her eyes, she contemplated a kind of bronze bell, with a monstrous head and a round helmet, placed upon a large mis-shapen body, without legs, and cut off upon a level with the knees, It resembled a colossal statue of rough workmanship, destined to ornament a tomb. By degrees, Consuelo, recovering from the torpor which had stolen over her, understood, as by voluntary intuition, that the sufferer was placed stooping beneath this bell. The weight was so terrible, that by no effort of human power could he raise it. The inward dimension was so exact as to forbid all movement. Still it was not with the design of stifling the victim that he was put there, for the visor of the helmet covered the place for the face, and the whole head-piece was pierced with small holes, in some of which were still planted long stilettoes. By the assistance of these cruel darts they tormented the victim to draw from him the avowal of his real or imaginary crime, the confession of his religious or political faith. A tuft of hair torn away in the agony, and glued, doubtless, with blood, issued from one of the holes opened with the stiletto. It was a lock of white hair!

Suddenly Consuelo saw no more, and ceased to suffer. Without receiving any warning of physical exhaustion, for her soul and body no longer existed but in the soul and body of violated and mutilated humanity, she sunk to the ground stiff and cold as a stutue from its pedestal; but as her head was about to strike the bronze of this infernal machine, she was received into the arms of a man whom she did not see. It was Liverani.

As she returned to consciousness, Consuelo found herself seated upon a purple carpet, which covered the white marble steps of an elegant Corinthian peristyle. Two masked men whom she recognised by the colour of their cloaks for Liverani and him whom she had reasonably supposed to be Marcus, held her in their arms, and were doing their utmost to revive her. Forty other persons, cloaked and masked, the same whom she had seen around the bier of Jesus, were ranged in two files along the steps, and sang in chorus a solemn hymn in an unknown tongue, waving at the same time chaplets of roses and palm, and branches of flowers.

The columns were ornamented with garlands, which were crossed in festoons, so as to form a triumphal arch above Consuelo before the closed door of the temple. The full moon, shining with all its brilliancy, alone lighted this white building, while on the outside, around this sanctuary, ancient yews, cypresses, and pines, formed an impenetrable thicket, a sacred grove as it were, beneath which murmured a mysterious stream, bright as silver.

"My sister," said Marcus, assisting Consuelo to rise, "you have issued from your trials victorious. Do not blush because you have suffered and physically yielded to the weight of your griefs. Your generous heart was broken with indignation and pity in presence of those palpable evidences of the crimes and evils of humanity. Had you arrived here undaunted and without assistance we should have felt less respect for you than we did whilst carrying you in fainting and overwhelmed. You have seen the crypts of a lordly chateau, not purposely selected, nor distinguished from others by the crimes of which it has been the theatre, but, like all the rest whose ruins cover a large part of Europe, frightful remains of that vast net-work by whose aid, for so many centuries, feudal power enveloped the civilised world, oppressing men with the crimes of its ferocious dominion and the horror of civil wars. These hideous abodes, these savage fortresses, have necessarily served as dens for all the crimes which humanity was obliged to witness, before arriving, by religious wars, by the labour of emancipating sects, and by the martyrdom of the chosen among men, at the notion of truth. Go through Germany, France, Italy, England, Spain, the Sclavonic countries, you will find no valley, you will ascend no mountain, without perceiving above you the imposing ruins of some terrible manor-house, or, at least, without discovering at your feet, among the grass, some remains of fortifications. These are the bloody traces of the right of conquest, exercised by the patricians over the enslaved classes; and were you to explore these ruins, were you to raise the soil which has closed over them, and which unceasingly labours to efface their traces, you would find in all the vestiges of what you have just seen here—a dungeon, a cave for the too numerous dead, narrow and fœtid cells for prisoners of importance, a corner for noiseless assassination; and at the summit of some old tower, or in the depths of some sub-

terranean construction, an instrument of torture for rebellious serfs or refractory soldiers, a gallows for deserters, and cauldrons for heretics. How many have perished in boiling pitch? how many have disappeared beneath the waves? how many have been buried alive within the ruins? Oh! if the walls of the chateaux, if the waves of the lakes and rivers, if the caves of the rocks could speak, and relate all that they have seen and concealed of iniquitous deeds, the number would be too great for history to register the detail!

"Moreover, is tyranny yet overthrown? Do kings and princes no longer ravage the earth? Does not war carry desolation into opulent cities, as well into the cottage of the peasant, at the least caprice of the smallest sovereign? Does not serfdom yet flourish over the half of Europe? Are not the troops almost everywhere subjected to the *régime* of the cane and lash? The finest and bravest soldiers in the world, the Prussian soldiers, are they not drilled like animals, by the blow of the whip? Are not the serfs of Russia governed by the knout? Are not the negroes worse treated in America than the dogs and horses? If the fortresses of the old barons are dismantled and converted into inoffensive dwellings, are not those of kings still standing? Do they not oftener serve as prisons for the innocent than for the guilty? And you, my sister, you the most gentle and noble of women, have you not been a captive at Spandau? We know you are generous; we rely upon your sense of justice and charity; but seeing you at the same time destined, like some of those now present, to return to the world, to frequent its courts, to approach the persons of its sovereigns, to be, in your case more particularly, the object of their seductions, we have thought it our duty to put you on your guard against the intoxication of this life of dazzling dangers; we have thought it our duty not to spare you even the most terrible teachings. We have spoken to your mind in the solitude to which we condemned you, and by the books we placed in your hands; we have spoken to your heart by words of paternal exhortation, by turns severe and tender; we have spoken to your eyes by trials more grievous and more profound than those of the ancient mysteries. Now, if you persist in receiving the initiation, you can fearlessly present yourself before those incorruptible but paternal judges, whom you already know, and who are waiting to crown you, or to restore you the liberty of quitting us for ever."

As he spoke thus, Marcus, raising his arm, showed Consuelo the door of the temple, above which the three sacramental words—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—were written in letters of fire.

Consuelo, physically weakened and overcome, lived no longer but in spirit. She had been unable to listen standing to the discourse of Marcus: obliged to seat herself on the shaft of a column, she leaned on Liverani, but without seeing, without thinking of him. Nevertheless, she had not lost a single word of the initiator. Pale as a spectre, her eyes fixed, her voice trembled, she had not that bewildered air which succeeds a nervous crisis. A concentrated enthusiasm filled her breast, whose feeble breathing was no longer perceptible to Liverani. Her black eyes, which fatigue and suffering had somewhat deepened, burned with a dark fire. A slight frown on the brow betrayed an immovable resolution, the first of her life. Her beauty at that moment filled those assistants with terror who had hitherto seen her invariably gentle and benevolent. Liverani trembled like the jasmine-leaf which the night air agitated on the brow of his beloved. She rose with greater strength than he could have expected; but her knees quickly failed her, and to ascend the steps, she allowed herself to be almost carried by him, without the pressure of his arms, which once had so moved her, or the contact of his heart with hers, distracting her for a moment from her inward meditation. He placed between his hand and that of Consuelo the silver cross, that talisman which invested him with rights over her, and which served to make him known. But Consuelo appeared neither to recognise the gage nor the hand which presented it. Hers was contracted by suffering; its pressure was mechanical, as when one seizes a branch to save oneself upon the brink of an abyss; but the heart's blood did not reach that frozen hand.

"Marcus!" said Liverani, in a low voice, as the latter was passing him to knock at the door of the temple, "do not leave us. The trial has been too great: I am terrified."

"She loves you," replied Marcus.

"Yes; but she may perhaps die!" replied Liverani, shuddering.

Marcus struck three times on the door, which opened, and shut again as soon as he had entered with Consuelo and Li-

verani. The rest of the brethren remained beneath the peristyle, waiting to be introduced for the ceremony of the initiation; for, between this initiation and the final trials, there was always a private conversation between the invisible chiefs and the candidate.

The interior of the pavilion, which served as a temple on the occasion of these initations, in the Château de ——, was magnificently ornamented, and decorated between each column with statues of the greatest friends of humanity. But Consuelo did not pause to consider exterior objects. Wholly engrossed with herself, she saw without surprise or emotion those same judges who had so deeply sounded her heart. She no longer felt any trouble in the presence of those men, whoever they might be, and awaited their sentence with apparent calmness.

The eighth personage, who, seated below the seven judges, always spoke for them, now said to Marcus, "Brother Introducer, what person is it you bring hither? What is her name?"

"Consuelo Porporina," replied Marcus.

"That is not what you are asked, my brother," replied Consuelo. "Do you not see that I am here in the dress of a bride, and not of a widow? Announce the Countess Albert de Rudolstadt."

"My daughter," said the brother orator, "I speak to you in the name of the council. You no longer bear the name you have invoked; your marriage with the Count de Rudolstadt is broken."

"By what right, and in virtue of what authority?" asked Consuelo, in a strong abrupt voice, like that of a person in fever. "I recognise no theocratic power. You have yourselves taught me to recognise no other rights than those I freely accord you, and to submit myself only to a paternal authority. Yours will not be such if you break my marriage without the consent of my husband and myself. This right neither he nor I have given you."

"You are deceived, my daughter. Albert has given us the right to dispose of your fate and his; you also have given this right by opening to us your heart, and confessing your love for another."

"I have confessed nothing to you," replied Consuelo: "and I deny the confession you would extract from me."

"Introduce the sibyl," said the orator to Marcus.

A woman of tall stature, clothed in white, with her face concealed beneath a veil, entered, and seated herself in the centre of the half circle formed by the judges.

By nervous trembling, Consuelo recognised Wanda.

"Speak, Priestess of Truth!" said the orator; "speak, interpreter and revealer of the most private secrets, of the most delicate emotions of the heart. Is this woman the wife of Albert de Rudolstadt?"

"She is his true and faithful wife," replied Wanda; "but at this moment you ought to pronounce her divorce. You see by whom she is conducted hither; you see that he of our children whose hand she holds is the man whom she loves, and to whom she ought to belong, in virtue of the imprescriptible right of love in marriage."

Consuelo turned with surprise towards Liverani, and looked at her own hand, which lay as it were stiff and dead in his. She appeared to be under the influence of a dream and making efforts to awake. At last she withdrew herself energetically from this clasp, and looking at the palm of her hand, saw the impression of her mother's cross.

"This, then, is the man whom I have loved!" said she, with the melancholy smile of a holy ingenuousness. Yes! I have loved him tenderly, madly; but it was a dream! I thought that Albert was no more, and you told me that this man was worthy of my esteem and confidence. Then I saw Albert; and I thought I understood, from his language, that he no longer desired to be my husband, and I did not defend myself from loving this unknown, whose letters and cares intoxicated me. But they tell me that Albert has always loved me, and that he renounced me from virtue and generosity. And why, then, did Albert persuade himself that I should yield to him in devotion? Of what criminal action have I hitherto been guilty, that I should be believed capable of breaking his heart by accepting a selfish happiness? No; I will never sully myself with such a crime. If Albert deems me unworthy of him because I have cherished another love in my heart—if he scruples to break his love, and does not desire to inspire a nobler—I will submit to his decree. I will accept this sentence of divorce, against which my heart and conscience nevertheless revolt, but I will neither be the wife nor the lover of another. Adieu,

Liverani, or whoever you may be, to whom I confided the cross of my mother in a day of abandonment, which leaves me neither shame nor remorse. Restore me this pledge, that there may be nothing between us but a remembrance of mutual esteem, and the consciousness of a duty accomplished without effort or bitterness."

The enthusiasm of Consuelo was at its height; words no longer sufficed for expression. A sort of vertigo seized her; and as the Pythonesses of old, in the paroxysm of their divine crises, gave way to cries and strange furies, so was she led to manifest the emotion which overwhelmed her by the expression most natural to her. She commenced singing in a loud voice, and in a transport at least equal to that she had experienced while singing the same air at Venice, for the first time in her life, and in the presence of Marcello and Porpora:—

I cieli immensi narrano
Del grande iddio la gloria!

This song came to her lips, because it is perhaps the most artless and thrilling expression which music has ever given to religious enthusiasm. But Consuelo was not sufficiently calm to restrain and direct her voice. After these two verses the intonation became a stifled sob, and bursting into tears, she fell on her knees. The Invisibles, electrified by her fervour, had risen simultaneously, as if to hear, standing in an attitude of respect, this inspired song. But as they saw her fall beneath her emotion, they all descended and approached her, while Wanda, seizing her in her arms, and placing her in those of Liverani, cried—

"Look at him, then, and know that God accords you the power of reconciling love and virtue, happiness and duty."

Consuelo, for a moment deaf, and as it were rapt into another world, looked at last on Liverani, whose mask Marcus had just removed. She uttered a piercing cry, and fell fainting on his breast as she recognised Albert. Albert and Liverani were the same.

CHAPTER XXX.

At this moment the gates of the temple opened with a brazen clang, and the Invisibles entered, walking two and two. The magic tones of the harmonica, then newly invented, and unknown to the wonderstruck ear of Consuelo, were heard in the air, seeming to descend from the cupola, which was half-opened to the rays of the moon, and to the vivifying breezes of the night. A shower of flowers fell slowly upon the happy couple, who were placed in the centre of this solemn procession. Wanda, standing beside a golden tripod, from which with her right hand she caused bright flames and clouds of perfume to burst forth, held in her left a chain of flowers and symbolic leaves, which she threw around the two lovers. The chiefs of the Invisibles, their faces covered with their long red drapery, and their heads encircled by similar garlands of oak and acacia, consecrated by their rites, were standing with their arms extended, as if to receive the brethren, who bent before them as they passed.

Albert, in this moment of supreme joy, when the eyes of Consuelo at length rested upon his with rapture—Albert, renovated by health and radiant with happiness, felt himself invested with that all-powerful faith which would remove mountains, if, at such moments, there were any other mountain to bear than the weight of our own reason troubled by excess of bliss. Consuelo was at length before him, like the Galathæa of the artists beloved by the gods, awaking at once to love and to life. Silent and collected, her countenance lighted up by a celestial glory, she was, for the first time in her life, perfectly incontestably beautiful; for, in fact, she now existed, completely and really, for the first time. A sublime serenity shone upon her brow, and in her large and liquid eyes might be read the rapture of her soul. She was so beautiful only through her unconsciousness of that which was passing in her heart, and over her countenance. Albert alone existed for her, or rather, she no longer existed but in

him, and he alone appeared to her worthy of boundless respect and admiration. For Albert too was transformed, and as if enveloped by a supernatural radiance in contemplating her. She saw, indeed, in the earnestness of his look, all the solemn grandeur of the sorrows he had borne; but this past bitterness had left upon his features no trace of physical suffering. He had upon his brow the calmness of the martyr awaking from death, who sees the earth dyed with his blood flying from beneath his feet, and the infinity of heaven opening above his head. In the grandest days of antique or of Christian art, no inspired artist ever created a nobler figure of hero or of saint.

All the Invisibles, struck in their turn with admiration, paused, after having formed a circle around them, and remained a few moments in contemplation of this pair, so pure before God, and so blessed among men. Then twenty manly and powerful voices chanted in chorus, to a measure of antique grandeur and simplicity, "O hymen! O hymenial!" The music was by Porpora, to whom the words had been sent with a request for an epithalamium for an illustrious marriage, and he had been worthily rewarded without knowing by whom. As Mozart on the eve of his death received his grandest inspiration for the mysteriously ordered Requiem, so was the imagination of old Porpora awakened by this mysterious poetry, and all his useful genius revived in the music of the nuptial song. In the first bars Consuelo recognised her beloved master; and turning herself with an effort from the gaze of her lover, she looked towards the cloisters in search of her adopted father; but his spairit only was there. Among those who had become its worthiest interpreters, Consuelo recognised many friends: Frederick de Trenck, Le Porporina, young Benda, Count Golowkin, Schubart, and the Chevalier d'Eon, whom she had known at Berlin, and of whose real sex she, as well as the whole of Europe, was ignorant; the Count of Saint Germain, the Chancellor Coccei, the husband of the Barbarini, the librarian Nicolai, Gottlieb, whose beautiful voice predominated over all the others; and lastly, Marcus, whom an energetic movement of Wanda pointed out to her, and whom, by a sympathetic instinct, she had already recognised as the guide who had presented her, and who had performed towards her the duties of

a godfather. All the Invisibles had opened and thrown back upon their shoulders their long sombre-looking black robes. A purple and white costume, elegant and simple, brightened by a gold chain, bearing the insignia of their order, gave to their group a festive aspect. Their masks were slipped over their wrists, ready to be replaced on their faces at the slightest signal of the watcher, placed as a sentinel upon the dome of the edifice.

The orator who officiated as an agent between the chiefs of the Invisibles and their adepts, likewise took off his mask and came to congratulate the happy couple. He was the Duke of ——, a wealthy prince who had dedicated his fortune, his intelligence, and his enthusiastic zeal, to the cause of the Invisibles. He was their host when they assembled, and his residence had long been the asylum of Wanda and of Albert, who were there concealed from profane eyes. That residence was also the chief, though not the only seat of the tribunal of the order, and their numerous meetings were held there only during a few days in the summer, unless required by some emergency. Initiated into all the secrets of the chiefs, the duke acted for them and with them, but he did not betray their incognito; and taking upon himself alone all the dangers of the enterprise, he was their interpreter, and the visible medium between them and the members of the association.

The marriage formula was pronounced, and the simple and touching rites of the new worship were performed with devotion and fervour. This engagement to love each other was not an isolated act performed in the midst of indifferent spectators, strangers to the moral tye which was thus contracted. All were called upon to sanction this religious consecration of two beings, bound to them by a common faith. They stretched their arms over the married couple to bless them, then they all took each other by the hands, and formed a living enclosure, a chain of fraternal affection and of religious association around them, pronouncing an oath to assist and protect them; to defend their honour and their lives; to sustain their existence in case of need; to use all their efforts to reclaim them to good, if they should relax in the rugged road of virtue; to preserve them as much as possible from persecutions and seductions from without, on all

occasions, and under all circumstances: in short, to love them as sacredly, as cordially, as deeply, as if they were united to them by name and by blood. The noble Trenck pronounced this formula for the whole assemblage, in eloquent and simple terms.

Wanda, who still remained unknown to the brothers of the order, now took the hands of her two children: "Thou art under the power of the miracle," said she. "Yes, the surrender of two wills which mingle and become one, is a miracle; for, by virtue of a divine right, every soul is eternally free. And nevertheless, when two souls give themselves to each other, and are linked together by love, their mutual possession becomes as sacred, as divine a right, as individual liberty. You see clearly that here there is a miracle, and that this mystery, as well as that of life and death, is known to God alone. God blesses thy vow, because it is He who inspires thee with faith to pronounce it. 'Always' is the most impassioned words of lovers. It is an oracle to them in their ecstasy of rapture. Eternity is the ideal of love as it is the ideal of faith. The human soul never more completely attains to the height of its power and lucidness than in the enthusiasm of a great love. The 'always' of lovers is, then, an internal revelation, a divine manifestation, which should show its sovereign brightness and its beneficent warmth upon every moment of their union. Woe to him who shall profane this holy formula! Such a one falls from a state of grace into a state of sin; he extinguishes faith, light, strength, and life in his heart."

"And I," said Consuelo, "I accept thy vow, oh Albert! and I adjure thee to accept mine. I, too, feel myself under the dominion of the miracle; and this 'always' of our short life appears to me as nothing in comparison with the eternity for which I desire to promise myself to thee."

"Fearless, noble soul," said Wanda, with a smile which seemed to beam through her veil; "pray to God that thou mayest enjoy eternity with him whom thou lovest, as the reward of thy fidelity to him in this short life."

"Oh, yes," cried Albert, raising towards heaven his wife's hand clapsed in his own, "that is the aim, the hope, and the reward! To love each other nobly and ardently in this phase of existence, in order to meet again and be eternally

united in those which follow! Oh! I feel that this is not the first day of our union; that we have already loved, already possessed each other in a former state of existence. So much happiness is not the work of chance. It is the hand of God which brings us together and reunites us, as the two halves of a single being inseparable through all eternity."

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